

EXPERT SECONDARY INCLUSIVE CLASSROOM MANAGEMENT

A Dissertation

by

MARCIA LYNN JOHNSON MONTAGUE

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2009

Major Subject: Educational Psychology

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ABSTRACT

Expert Secondary Inclusive Classroom Management.

(December 2009)

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The purpose of this study was to gain an understanding of the management practices of expert secondary general education teachers in inclusive classrooms. Specifically, expert teachers of classrooms who included students with severe cognitive disabilities, including autism, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury were of interest in this study. Further, this study was designed to determine how the teachers learned to expertly manage their inclusive classrooms. Eight teachers met criteria for inclusion in this study as expert teachers, through confirmed nomination, experience requirements, holding required teaching certifications, and through evidencing positive impacts on their included students with disabilities. Interviews were conducted with these eight teachers, in addition to telephone interviews with their special education teaching peers. Through a constant-comparative method of data analysis, it was found that teachers learned to manage their inclusive classes in a variety of ways. They learned from traditional opportunities, self-directed learning, and through learning from others. Each of these teachers engaged in continual learning strategies that began during pre-

service preparation and continued through professional development while in-service. Additionally, the teachers in this study managed their classrooms in a variety of ways which addressed student learning, the environment, and student behavior. Management of student learning was evidenced through 17 identifiable practices, including ones such as modifying product expectations, including multi-sensory opportunities, and including real-world applicability. Teachers managed their inclusive classroom environments through 11 different practices, such as establishing a structure with rules, working as a whole group/class, and creating a calm learning environment. Management of behavioral expectations was executed by these expert teachers through 12 distinct management practices, including consistency with consequences, maintaining a respectful attitude and tone with the class, and being aware of student stressors. Management practices of these expert teachers additionally aligned well with the principles of Universal Design for Learning (UDL).

DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, fellow educators, and the many children throughout the United States and the world. Without each of them, this dissertation would mean very little.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Classrooms across the United States today are comprised of students with different backgrounds, ethnicities, native languages, and ability levels (U.S. Department of Education, 2008b). In addition, the inclusion of students with disabilities in general education classrooms is becoming an increasingly common practice (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a), making these classrooms even more diverse. As a result, instructional practices for students with disabilities, including those with significant intellectual disabilities have shifted over the years. Before the inclusion movement, instruction for students with significant disabilities rarely occurred in the general education classroom (Armstrong, 2004). Today, if an individualized education program (IEP) committee determines that the general education classroom is the least restrictive environment for a student, the individualized needs of the student must be met in that setting (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a).

The U.S. Department of Education (2007a) has reported that the number of students receiving instruction in the general education classroom has steadily increased over the years. However, students with mild disabilities (such as those with speech impairments or learning disabilities) are consistently included at a higher rate than are students with significant intellectual disabilities (such as those with autism or traumatic brain injury). For example, in 2002, while 76.9% of students with disabilities overall

received instruction in the general education classroom for the majority of the instructional day, the percentage was much lower for students with significant disabilities such as an intellectual disability (41.4%), autism (42.4%), or traumatic brain injury (63.2%) (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Inclusion patterns of students in Texas resemble national patterns: Eighty-five percent of students with disabilities in Texas were included in the general education classroom in 2002, while students with an intellectual disability (32.1%), autism (47.7%), or traumatic brain injury (67.4%) were included at a much lower rate (U.S. Department of Education, 2006).

Inclusion rates for students with significant intellectual disabilities may be lower than that of students with mild disabilities due, in part, to the high level of instructional and behavioral supports needed by students with significant disabilities (Downing, 2002). Students with significant disabilities typically need supports such as an additional teacher or paraprofessional in the classroom, modified instructional materials, a structured learning environment, and frequent feedback (Evertson, Emmer & Worsham, 2006; Hyman & Towbin, 2007; Michaud, Duhaime, Wade, Rabin, Jones, & Lazar, 2007). General education teachers frequently report that they are unprepared to teach or provide needed supports to students with significant disabilities (Cook, 2002; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Meister & Melnick, 2003). These factors may contribute to the lower rates of successful inclusion for these students.

Another factor that might affect the successful inclusion of students with significant disabilities is classroom management. Meeting the instructional needs of students with varying abilities, managing the classroom, and collaborating with other

educators and service providers are all management functions that an inclusive general education teacher must master (Downing, 2002). Given that teachers have frequently reported that classroom management is a large concern even in general education classroom (Gee, 2001; Meister & Melnick, 2003; Veenman, 1984; Watson, 2006), the management of an inclusive classroom is likely to be an additional challenge for teachers who are unprepared for inclusion of students with disabilities.

It is not clear the extent to which general education teachers are truly prepared for this challenge. General education teacher preparation has traditionally prepared teachers in pedagogical content knowledge (Brownell, Ross, Colón, & McCallum, 2005), but pre-service training in classroom management (Houston & Williamson, 1992; Watson, 2006; Wesley & Vocke, 1992) and inclusion (Downing, 2002; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Winter, 2006) is usually limited. With limited training on classroom management and inclusion, successful management of an inclusive classroom which includes students with significant disabilities would possibly be quite challenging for the teacher.

Statement of the Problem

Research has been conducted on the classroom management decisions of teachers, on expert teachers, and on instructional programming for students with significant disabilities. However, little research exists at the intersection of these three areas, namely, on the management decisions of expert general education teachers who teach students with significant intellectual disabilities. Brophy (2006) suggested that the most fruitful method for investigating how to accommodate special education students in

general education classrooms is to identify, “teachers who handle these challenges most successfully and then observing them and interviewing them to identify the policies and principles that appear responsible for their success” (p. 39).

In one of the few studies of this type, Gelzheiser, Meyers, Slesinski, Douglas, & Lewis (2002) observed and interviewed 52 teachers at various instructional levels who taught students with diverse disabilities. Gelzheiser et al. identified patterns among the inclusive practices of the general education teachers. Specifically, the authors noted patterns in grouping strategies, modifications, and teacher expectations. With regards to grouping strategies, the researchers reported that teachers who facilitate inclusion use a variety of grouping strategies, including whole group, large group, small group, independent practice, and individual instruction strategies. Regarding their modifications, the researchers described the teachers’ patterns in modifying seating, directions, instruction, testing, and assignments in their inclusive classrooms.

This study extended the work done by Gelzheiser et al. in that it exclusively examined expert secondary teachers’ inclusive management decisions and practices. Further, it drew from a sample exclusively comprised of teachers at the secondary level. Research on classroom management at the secondary level is critical; however, existing management research has been primarily completed in elementary classrooms (Brophy, 2006). Additionally, the inclusion of students with significant intellectual disabilities is more typical at the elementary level (Carter & Hughes, 2006). As students age, curriculum demands and concepts become increasingly challenging (Downing, 2002). With the challenging curriculum, failure rates are higher at the high school level and

effective inclusive practices are not common (Gelzheiser et al., 2002). Successful inclusion of students with significant intellectual disabilities at the secondary level then becomes rarer, and students more frequently receive instruction in community settings rather than in the general education classroom (McDonnell, Hardman, & McDonnell, 2003). An investigation of secondary general education teachers who instruct inclusionary classrooms would thus be a valuable addition to our knowledge about effective inclusionary practices.

Purpose

Previous studies have not investigated how secondary teachers in inclusive settings make decisions about classroom management. Only a few studies have examined management practices of inclusive teachers; however, these studies did not focus on expert teachers, nor did those studies specifically focus on the secondary level. The purpose of this research study, therefore, was to gain an understanding of the classroom management decisions and the practices in which expert general education secondary teachers engaged. Further, this study investigated how these teachers learned these inclusive classroom management skills. Below are the two research questions that guided this study.

Research Questions

1. What are the classroom management decisions and classroom management practices of expert general education secondary teachers of student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?

2. How do expert secondary teachers learn to manage classrooms that include student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?

Definition of Terms

The following terms are used in this study:

Autism

Autism is a developmental disability in which communication and social interaction are significantly impacted, and usually adversely affects learning. Typically autism is evident in a child by age three. Autism is also characterized by repetitive activities or movements, a resistance to change in the environment or routine and atypical responses to sensory stimuli (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a).

Classroom Management

Classroom management that is executed effectively requires: “(a) extensive knowledge of what is likely to happen in classrooms; (b) an ability to process a large amount of information rapidly; and (c) skill in carrying out effective actions over a long period of time” (Doyle, 1980, p. 29). Further, classroom management includes teaching behaviors that shape and maintain classroom learning conditions through an “on-going, maintenance oriented process” (Colville-Hall, 2004, p. 1).

Expert Teacher

An expert teacher, as defined for this study, is a teacher who has superior skill and knowledge in a given educational context, such that the teacher can perform tasks in an effective and efficient manner (Ericsson, 1996). Expertise assumes positive outcomes. For this study, the given educational context will be the area of including students with

significant intellectual disabilities in the general education classroom. Further, an expert teacher develops his or her expertise in the particular context of inclusion after “hundreds and thousands of hours” (Berliner, 2004, p. 201).

Inclusion

Inclusion of students with moderate severe disabilities denotes: (a) placement in natural settings, where (b) all students are together for instruction and learning, and where (c) supports and modifications are provided to meet the learner’s educational outcomes, such that (d) all students have a sense of belongingness and acceptance, and where (e) education teams collaborate to provide services for the student (Ryndak, Jackson, & Billingsley, 2000).

Intellectual Disability

“Intellectual disability” is a term that is rapidly replacing the term “mental retardation” in the disability literature (Prabhala, 2007). Intellectual disability includes those individuals who were previously diagnosed with mental retardation or who would be eligible for the diagnosis of mental retardation (AAMR, 2002; Schalock, Luckasson & Shogren, 2007). The American Association on Intellectual and Developmental Disabilities (AAIDD) defines intellectual disability (previously termed mental retardation) as a disability that is,

...characterized by significant limitations both in intellectual functioning and in adaptive behavior as expressed in conceptual, social, and practical adaptive skills. This disability originates before age 18 (p. 116). An individual with mental retardation evidences intellectual functioning that is significantly sub-

average. Deficits are also evident in adaptive behavior. Typically, mental retardation is manifested during a child's developmental period and adversely impacts education (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a).

Mental Retardation

For the purpose of this study, and to follow the lead of AAIDD, the term intellectual disability will be used throughout this paper, rather than the term mental retardation. However, to aid study participants, the term mental retardation will be used during interviewing, as this term is what is currently used in federal laws and is more frequently used in the State of Texas.

Traumatic Brain Injury

An individual with traumatic brain injury has acquired an injury due to an external physical force. This injury results in a functional disability, psychosocial impairment, or both, which in turn have an adverse effect on education. Traumatic brain injury can occur from an open or closed head injury, but does not include brain injuries that are congenital, degenerative, or due to birth trauma (U.S. Department of Education, 2007a). Brain injury can also be caused by non-traumatic events including stroke, infectious diseases, near drowning, insulin shock, or vascular accidents (Savage & Wolcott, 1994).

CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Classroom Management Decisions of Teachers

Research has consistently shown that effective classroom management is associated with student achievement gains (Brophy & Evertson, 1976; Brophy & Good, 1986; Gettinger & Kohler, 2006; Good & Brophy, 2008; Teddlie & Stringfield, 1993).

Effective classroom management requires that a teacher has:

- (1) extensive knowledge of what is likely to happen in classrooms;
- (2) an ability to process a large amount of information rapidly; and
- (3) skill in carrying out effective actions over a long period of time.

(Doyle, 1980, p. 29)

More recently, Colville-Hall (2004) discussed how effective classroom management involves teaching behaviors that shape and maintain classroom learning conditions. The author described this teaching behavior as an “on-going, maintenance oriented process” (Colville-Hall, 2004, p. 1). The link between effective classroom management and student gains in academic achievement implies that all teachers should be well prepared to manage their classrooms.

As part of the ongoing process of managing a classroom, teachers must make numerous decisions of many types on a frequent basis. For example, teachers must make decisions about the physical environment (Emmer, Evertson, & Worsham, 2006; Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997), standards for student behavior (Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Sprick, Garrison, & Howard, 1998), strategies to increase desired behaviors while

decreasing undesired behaviors (Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997), and ways to determine if these strategies were effective (Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997). Teachers use cues from their students to decide what to do (Clark & Peterson, 1986), and to make interactive decisions about motivating students (Charles & Charles, 2004; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Emmer et al., 2006). Given the many different types of decisions that teachers make for classroom management, one can surmise that such thought requires significant cognitive skill.

Effective teachers further use skill in delivering instruction, which can be seen as part of classroom management (Charles & Charles, 2004; Colville-Hall, 2004; Emmer, et al., 2006). As part of delivering effective instruction, teachers make decisions when lesson planning. Many times the lesson objectives or subject matter impact those decisions (Blank, 1988; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Watson, 2006). Teachers then make decisions during the actual instruction or presentation of a lesson (Blank, 1988; Clark & Peterson, 1986; Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997; Watson, 2006). These decisions during instruction can involve a teacher's assessment of student behaviors as well as cues to determine if additional support is needed (Blank, 1988; Gilbert & Lignugaris-Kraft, 1997). Finally, teachers make decisions about classroom management following a lesson, such as during individual reflection on the lesson (Blank, 1988). In an inclusive classroom, teachers also make classroom management decisions involving students who are functioning at different instructional, social, and cognitive levels. Classroom management decision making is thus multi-faceted and complex, and perhaps even more so in inclusive classrooms.

Effective Classroom Management

Literature on effective teachers has a long history (Leinhardt, 1983). Teachers who are effective are able to make decisions about routines and implement them in the classroom (Evertson et al., 2006). These teachers have high expectations for student behavior (Sprick et al., 1998) and minimize time spent on organizational and management decisions. Thus, effective teachers are able to spend a larger amount of time on academic interactions with students (Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997). Effective classroom management decision making practices are likely to be routinely employed by those who are expert teachers.

Expert Teachers

Within every professional field, there are those individuals who stand out as expert. These professionals do an excellent job of meeting the needs of their clients or performing the required skills at a high degree. Ericsson (1996) defined expertise as superior skill and knowledge in a given area, such that the expert can perform tasks in an effective and efficient manner. Expertise is developed in a particular context after “hundreds and thousands of hours” (Berliner, 2004, p. 201). Teachers develop expert ability in part as, “a product of extensive experience and the ability to access information from a highly organized knowledge base” (Stough & Palmer, 2003, p. 206).

Palmer, Stough, Burdenski, & Gonzales (2005) reviewed the ways in which researchers defined and selected teachers as experts. In this study, the authors discussed the markers that have been used by researchers when determining teacher expertise. They identified experience, commonly years of teaching experience, as one of the most

common indicators of expertise. The authors also found that expert teachers are chosen by researchers through social recognition or nomination, professional or social group membership, and through normative or criterion-based performance indicators. The authors concluded that the most rigorous standard for determining teacher expertise should be multi-faceted, and include: a) teaching experience, b) social nomination and recognition, c) documented impact on student performance, and d) professional and group membership (for example, teaching certification and appropriate degree).

Researchers have shown that expert teachers engage in activities that novice teachers do not (Berliner, 2004). Berliner explained that expert teachers develop automaticity and routinization in their teaching tasks. Expert teachers are also more flexible, sensitive to task demands, and opportunistic than are novice teachers (Berliner, 2004). Bond, Smith, Baker, and Hattie (2000) developed prototypic characteristics of expert teachers, which include the following:

- (1) better use of knowledge;
- (2) extensive pedagogical content knowledge including deep representations of subject matter knowledge;
- (3) better problem-solving strategies;
- (4) better adaptation and modification of goals for diverse learners and better skills for improvisation;
- (5) better decision making;
- (6) more challenging objectives;
- (7) better classroom climate;

- (8) better perception of classroom events and better ability to read the cues from students;
- (9) greater sensitivity to context;
- (10) better monitoring of learning and providing feedback to students;
- (11) more frequent testing of hypotheses;
- (12) greater respect for students; and
- (13) display of more passion for teaching.

In their study, Bond et al. (2002) compared two groups of experienced and well-prepared teachers and found that the expert teachers scored exceptionally well on the above characteristics and could pass the National Board Certification test. Although the Bond et al. (2002) study did discuss expert teacher's adapting and modifying for diverse learners, it did not address the expert management of general education classes that include students with disabilities.

Several studies have delineated the skills and knowledge that expert teachers use in the classroom on a daily basis. First, expert teachers use student information for planning and instructional delivery (Strahan, 1989). Secondly, expert teachers possess a great deal of instructional knowledge (Swanson, O'Connor & Cooney, 1990). Third, they focus their instructional decisions on the subject matter (Leinhardt & Smith, 1985) as well as on their concern for student learning (Stough & Palmer, 2003). Only one study was found, however, that investigated teacher expertise in a context of a general education classroom that included students with disabilities.

In a study of differentiation for a diverse classroom, Carolan and Guinn (2007) interviewed and observed five expert middle school teachers during one academic year. As part of their classrooms, these five teachers included students with disabilities such as ADHD, hearing loss, and physical disabilities. Carolan and Guinn sought to identify strategies that these teachers used to address individual needs in the classroom. The authors noted several activities in which expert teachers of diverse classrooms commonly engaged:

- (1) offering personalized scaffolding,
- (2) using flexible means to reach defined ends,
- (3) mining subject-area expertise, and
- (4) creating a caring classroom in which differences are seen as assets (p. 45).

The Carolan and Guinn (2007) study is an initial exploration of teacher expertise with diverse students, including students with disabilities. However, the study did not consider students with significant intellectual disabilities, nor did it specifically examine classroom management practices.

Stough and Palmer (2003) studied a group of 19 expert special educators. These teachers were all experienced teachers who were perceived by others as being exceptional teachers. Further, these teachers instructed students who made substantial progress on their individual goals and objectives. Stough and Palmer sought to understand the thoughts these teachers had about instruction and to describe the decisions the teachers made. As a portion of this study, the authors found that teachers

used proactive classroom management to prevent behavioral challenges from their students with disabilities. The Stough and Palmer (2003) study provides us with information about how expert teachers manage classes with students with disabilities. However, the study was of special education teachers. Further research is needed of general education teachers in inclusive settings. No study has examined the impact of including students with significant intellectual disabilities in general education classrooms, nor has any study specifically examined classroom management of these classrooms.

Teaching Students with Significant Intellectual Disabilities

The Individuals with Disabilities Education Improvement Act of 2004 (IDEIA) requires that students have specific goals that are appropriate for their cognitive and functional level. IDEIA further requires that this instruction be provided in the least restrictive environment (Evertson et al., 2006; Hyman & Towbin, 2007). The least restrictive environment varies depending on the student's abilities and needs (U.S. Department of Education, 2008a). However, for most students, the least restrictive environment is the general education classroom.

Inclusion has become a widespread practice that is frequently supported in the literature (Cole, Waldron, & Majd, 2004; Downing & Eichinger, 2003; Smith, 2007; Van Laarhoven, Munk, Lynch, Bosma, & Rouse, 2007). Several researchers also have reported successful outcomes for students with significant intellectual disabilities included in general education settings (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Dore, Dion, Wagner, &

Brunet, 2002; Hunt, Farron-Davis, Beckstead, Curtis, & Goetz, 1994; Wolpert, 1996, 2001). These studies are summarized in the following paragraphs.

Carter and Hughes (2006) studied the perspectives of general education teachers, special education teachers, paraprofessionals, and administrators in regards to the inclusion of secondary students with significant disabilities. Specifically, the authors considered the perceptions, “of high school staff regarding the goals, barriers, benefits, outcomes, and supports associated” with inclusion (Carter & Hughes, 2006, p. 174). They found that staff reported a number of benefits for students with disabilities, including social interaction, learning social skills, development of friendships, personal growth, and learning of academic and vocational skills. In addition, the authors found benefits of inclusion for general education students as well as for the faculty, staff, and administrators.

In the Dore et al. (2002) study, the authors examined the inclusion of two 15-year old high school students with intellectual disabilities. One student had an IQ of 62, while the other’s was 46. Both of these students had been served in a special education classroom and then moved into an inclusive general education classroom. The authors analyzed the academic benefits, social benefits, and feasibility of the inclusion of these students. The researchers conducted observations of the students both in the classroom and in the cafeteria, as well as conducted interviews with the regular classroom teachers. The authors found that students were more frequently involved in individual activities, and found an increase in academic engagement for one student while in the general education classroom. In relation to social benefits, the authors found that although

students did interact more frequently with their general education peers in inclusion settings, social integration as a whole was still lacking. Further efforts to maximize social benefits were needed for successful inclusion of these students. The high school teachers involved were fairly satisfied with and accepting of the inclusion of the students. All teachers involved reported that they would be willing to include students with intellectual disabilities in the future, given needed supports were in place. Finally, the authors concluded that, “full-time inclusion in high school is pedagogically feasible and, to some extent, beneficial for adolescents with MR” (Dore et al., 2002, p. 260).

In another study which demonstrated support for inclusion, Hunt et al. (1994) evaluated effects of general education placement versus special education placement for students with severe disabilities. The authors looked at 16 elementary education programs: eight were full inclusion programs, and eight were special education class programs. The authors chose two students from each program, one with a more substantial disability and one with a disability of lesser impact. Through observation and document analysis, the authors found that students included in the general education classroom participated more in academic activities and less in “isolated basic skills” instruction (Hunt et al., 1994, p. 210). They also found that students with a more significant disability were “significantly more actively engaged” in the general education classroom (p. 210).

Wolpert (1996, 2001) evaluated the educational practices of 120 regular education teachers who instructed students with Down syndrome, which often includes intellectual disability. In 1996, Wolpert discussed the educational challenges of inclusion

found when reviewing the teacher questionnaires that had been completed, using open-ended questions, rating scales, and checklists. In 1996, Wolpert reached the conclusion that based on teacher and parent responses, the inclusion of students with Down syndrome in the general education classroom was successful. Later, in 2001, Wolpert discussed the successful practices of these teachers in including students with Down syndrome. She discussed how teachers “found the (inclusion) experience challenging, rewarding, and of great value to their general education students as well as the child with Down syndrome” (p. 1).

In a recent summary of 14 empirical studies, Freeman (2000) found that the bulk of the studies supported the inclusion of students with intellectual disabilities in general education classrooms. The author examined studies that were: a) published empirical articles, b) focused on school-aged students, c) focused on students with intellectual disability, d) compared groups (either students with intellectual disability in different settings, or students with intellectual disability with general education students), and e) investigated a social or academic outcome with the educational placement as an independent variable. The author was unable to conduct a meta-analysis as only 14 published studies meeting the set criteria, but instead provided a summary of these studies and conclusions/implications. Freeman (2000) found that students with intellectual disability who were fully included in the general education classroom benefitted academically. Further, students who spent a larger amount of time in the general education classroom benefitted in social skill development as well. Although

there is much support for inclusive practices in schools, there remain barriers to effective implementation, especially at the secondary level.

Opposition to Inclusion

Although there is tremendous social support for as well as research that backs inclusive practices for students with significant cognitive disabilities, there is opposition to inclusion as well. Researchers and practitioners who oppose inclusion cite that students with disabilities do not get the appropriate support and specialized attention that they need while in the general education classroom (Tornillo, 1994). Opponents further state that the learning of regular education students is disrupted due to the inclusion of students with disabilities (Tornillo, 1994). An additional argument against inclusion is that teachers are being required to increase academic standards for their students, and when students with disabilities are included it is difficult for teachers to reach all students and the required achievement accountability standards (Lieberman, 1992; Tornillo, 1994). Opponents state that not all teachers are trained for inclusion, and the needed resources and supports are not always available (Cromwell, 2004; Tornillo, 1994). Finally, opponents state that inclusion programs are more costly than special education separate class programs, when inclusion is implemented responsibly (Sklaroff, 1994). Although these arguments exist, it is reasonable to believe that with proper training and with proper provision of needed supports and staff, inclusion could be successfully implemented while minimizing the issues raised above.

Barriers to Inclusion

Although studies have shown that inclusion is frequently the most successful instructional setting for students with disabilities, it must be noted that these students often need instructional and behavioral supports. Usually supports are established in the child's individualized education program (IEP) and are based on developmental level, need for supports, and educational goals (Batshaw, Shapiro, & Farber, 2007).

Modifications and supports take different forms for students with significant disabilities. Modifying instructional materials, providing a consulting teacher, and providing team-taught classes are all supports that Hyman and Towbin (2007) recommend for students with autism. Similarly, Michaud et al. (2007) described how students who have acquired a moderate or severe traumatic brain injury often require educational modifications. General education teachers have reported a willingness to teach an inclusive classroom, provided that supports are in place (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). However, when necessary supports are lacking, students often do not experience the same level of success.

In some instances, teacher attitudes have been found to be unaccepting of students with disabilities in their classrooms and unwilling to accept responsibility for inclusion. Boling (2007) examined one general education teacher candidate's conception of inclusion and attitude towards teaching students with disabilities over a 15-week long semester course. Boling found that the student "struggled throughout the course to understand the goals of inclusion...she did not think it was her responsibility as a general education teacher, to educate students with disabilities" (Boling, 2007, p. 222). Similarly, Carter and Hughes (2006) found that special education teachers most

frequently reported that the attitudes of other teachers and staff were the most substantial barrier to effective inclusion of students with significant disabilities.

Another barrier to inclusion discussed in the literature is the need for supports. The academic supports needed are often due to a substantial gap between the academic abilities of the included students with disabilities and the academic demands in the secondary general education classrooms (Schumaker & Deshler, 1988; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). To aid students with this gap between their abilities and curricular demands, supports are needed by students. Carter and Hughes (2006) found that an often reported barrier to inclusion was, “lack of personnel to support students in general education classrooms” (p. 180).

However, many times it is the case that secondary curriculum goals and school structures do not allow for students to receive the types of supports that they need (Schumaker & Deshler, 1988; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). The characteristics of secondary level education many times will also pose a barrier to effective inclusion for students with disabilities. These characteristics include such elements as the large amounts of curriculum to be covered, the sometimes differing goals of special education and general education teachers, pressures from the community, time constraints for teachers, and the level of independence teachers have over their particular courses (Schumaker & Deshler, 1988; Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Even though these barriers do sometimes exist, inclusive practices have been shown to result in benefits to all students when campuses and teachers work through the barriers (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Downing et al., 1997; Downing, 2002).

Benefits of Inclusion

Including a student with a significant disability in the general education classroom offers both social and academic benefits for that student (Carter & Hughes, 2006). Socially, inclusion provides students with significant disabilities the opportunity to model appropriate behaviors (Downing, Eichinger, & Williams, 1997; Hyman & Towbin, 2007; Smith, 2007) and to interact with classmates (Carter & Hughes, 2006). In the Downing et al. (1997) study, the authors conducted structured interviews of 27 professionals in a total of four school districts on their perceptions of barriers and benefits to inclusion of students with significant disabilities. The authors found that over half of the participants reported that the opportunity to model appropriate behaviors was a benefit of inclusion for the students with significant disabilities (Downing et al., 1997). Other studies find that students are provided opportunities to establish friendships (Carter & Hughes, 2006) and a sense of acceptance in inclusive classrooms (Hunt & Goetz, 1997). Inclusion also aids in the development of social competence (Freeman, 2000) and social skills (Carter & Hughes, 2006).

Learning opportunities and challenges are often present in inclusive classrooms that are not present in self-contained classrooms (Downing, 2002). Inclusive practices thus provide academic benefits for the student with a disability. Studies have shown that students with significant disabilities also benefit academically in an inclusive environment by learning academic skills (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Hunt et al., 1994). In a review of 19 studies on inclusion, Hunt and Goetz (1997) found that students with significant disabilities make positive academic growth. In addition, Freeman (2000)

found that students made greater academic progress when included in the general education classroom for a greater amount of time.

Not only do the students with disabilities benefit from inclusion, students without disabilities have been found to benefit from inclusion as well (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Downing, 2002; Downing et al., 1997; Peltier, 1997). Being educated alongside students with disabilities provides students without disabilities the opportunity to teach others and to acquire leadership skills (Downing et al., 1997). Students have also been found to exhibit increased responsibility and citizenship skills (Carter & Hughes, 2006).

Additionally, students without disabilities have been shown to develop an acceptance of and appreciation for diversity (Carter & Hughes, 2006; Downing et al., 1997). In the Downing et al. (1997) study, the development of acceptance and appreciation for diverse individuals was mentioned by a majority of those interviewed about the benefits of inclusion for students without a disability. Additionally, students without disabilities have been shown to display higher levels of self-esteem, as reported by their teachers, through being part of an inclusive classroom (Downing et al., 1997). Finally, when compared with traditional classroom settings, some studies have shown that students without disabilities made greater academic gains when in an inclusive classroom (Cole et al., 2004), while other studies show that there is no negative effect on the academic performance of students without disabilities (Trejo, 2008).

Teachers must ensure that their classroom management as well as their instructional support meets the needs of these students. Teachers may need to manage their classroom in such a way that provides a consistent, structured routine and

environment, which is particularly necessary for both students with autism (Evertson et al., 2006) and traumatic brain injury (Hyman & Towbin, 2007; Michaud et al., 2007). Students may additionally need focused, structured instruction that is motivational and provides them with feedback (Evertson et al., 2006; Michaud et al., 2007). Pre-service teacher training must thus prepare general teachers for these challenges if special education students are to succeed in inclusive classrooms.

Teacher Preparation

Most studies have shown that teachers do not receive adequate training in how to include students with disabilities in their classrooms (Boling, 2007; Downing, 2002). In a study of new teacher concerns, one of the main concerns reported was working with students with disabilities (Thomas and Kiley, 1994). Teachers have repeatedly reported that they have received insufficient support and training on how to include students with disabilities into the general education classroom (Boling, 2007; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Winter, 2006). In the Boling (2007) study, the author found that a general education pre-service teacher did not feel prepared to teach students with disabilities, nor did she understand the goals of inclusion. The teacher felt hopeless in not knowing how to work with students with disabilities. The student who was the focus for Boling's study had been introduced to inclusion in one course prior to the study, and had not taken, nor was she required to take any coursework related to special education as part of her teacher preparation program (Boling, 2007). Given such inadequate training, it makes sense that teachers are often reluctant to include students with disabilities in their classrooms.

Soodak, Podell, and Lehman (1998) surveyed 188 general education teachers of different age levels to determine teachers' responses to inclusion. Four surveys were given to the participants, including a response to inclusion survey, a teacher efficacy scale, a differentiated teaching survey, and a school climate survey. The authors found that teachers were unreceptive and anxious about including students with intellectual disabilities. Teachers also reported being fearful about including students with physical disabilities as well as being unreceptive about including students with behavioral or learning disabilities. No information was provided about the training in which these teachers had received, other than that some of the teachers were enrolled in a graduate program at the time of the study. However, the authors did find that, in general, teachers with more teaching experience tended to be more unreceptive and hostile to inclusion while teachers with less experience were less hostile and more receptive (Soodak et al., 1998).

Management of problem behaviors is a common concern for new teachers. Watson (2006) found that teachers felt prepared by their university coursework in the subject area of science, but conversely felt unprepared in pedagogical issues such as classroom management. Similarly, Meister and Melnick (2003), in a national study of 273 beginning teachers, found that the "greatest concern of all the new teachers was their inability to deal with the aberrant behavior and diverse needs of some students" (p. 87). The authors concluded that "the inclusion of special education students into the regular education classroom adds a new dimension to classroom management" (p. 88). Teachers in the Meister and Melnick study felt unprepared to work with students with atypical

behaviors, such as Tourette's Syndrome, and found managing the responses of other students to these behaviors challenging. These studies support the need for classroom management content as an integral part of pre-service teacher preparation programs.

Teacher preparation programs should prepare general education teachers for instructing students with special needs and managing the general education classroom. Cook (2002) stated that all general education pre-service teachers should complete coursework that focuses on effective strategies for instructing students with disabilities. Scott's (2006) study, although specific to secondary business teachers, considered the competencies needed by teachers in working with students with disabilities. Competencies in classroom management were rated most highly (with a 4.61 mean rating on a Likert-type scale where 1 = strongly disagree to where 5 = strongly agree) by a panel of expert business teachers. Also rated highly by the panel were competencies related to inclusion (4.29 mean rating) (Scott, 2006). However, although the need for teacher preparation in classroom management and inclusion exists, little research exists that describes how pre-service teachers can best be prepared to include students with disabilities in the general education classroom (Hamre & Oyster, 2004).

Researchers have emphasized that optimal pre-service teacher training should include a number of key elements: (a) classroom management (Brophy, 2006; Brownell et al., 2005; Jones, 2006; Landau, 2001; Spinelli, 1998; Stough, Montague, & Landmark, 2006), (b) behavioral interventions (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; King-Sears, 1997), (c) accommodations (Cook & Friend, 1990; Coombs-Richardson & Mead, 2001), (d) academic interventions (King-Sears &

Cummings, 1996; King-Sears, 1997), (e) communication and collaboration (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; Cook & Friend, 1990; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; King-Sears, 1997; Spinelli, 1998; Van Laarhoven et al., 2007; Voltz & Elliott, 1997), (f) experience in working with diverse students (Cook, 2002; Kling & Banit, 1996; Van Laarhoven et al., 2007), (g) grouping (Gelzheiser, Meyers, Slesinski, Douglas, & Lewis, 2002; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; King-Sears, 1997), and (h) assessment (Cook, 2002; King-Sears, 1997; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; Spinelli, 1998). Each of these areas will be described in the following sections.

Classroom Management

A first key element of optimal pre-service teacher training is classroom management. Management-related issues are a common concern for general education teachers (Brophy, 2006). Stough (2006) suggested that teacher preparation programs should ensure that, “the essential skill of classroom management becomes a fundamental part of the training program of all teachers” (p. 921). Landau (2001, p. 4) similarly asserts that management skills are, “the most valuable skills set a teacher can have.” Recommended practices for pre-service teachers include management training in smaller classes such that discussions and problem-solving opportunities are more available (Jones, 2006), instruction on proactive behavior management (King-Sears, 1997), and training on how to adjust classroom management techniques so that students with diverse needs can be effectively taught (Spinelli, 1998).

Management courses that are provided for pre-service teachers should ideally contain field experiences that include diverse students and collaboration between pre-

service and in-service teachers (Brownell et al., 2005). Jones (2006) added to Brownell's suggestions, stating that field experiences should be of high quality and have a sufficient duration. In addition to these suggestions for optimal training, Stough et al. (2006) recommended that a separate classroom management course be required for all pre-service teachers, rather than classroom management being included as portions of different courses. Stough et al. (2006) go on to recommend that the course include a concurrent, integrated field-based component, as well as include classroom management and behavioral modification strategies and theories. Within inclusive classrooms, Spinelli (1998) recommended that pre-service teachers be trained to adjust classroom management techniques so that students with diverse needs can be effectively taught.

Behavioral Interventions

General education teachers need training in behavioral interventions for their students with disabilities, as well as for their students without disabilities. Training in intervention and behavior management techniques to facilitate inclusion is a recommended practice (Bruneau-Balderrama, 1997; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; MacPherson-Court, McDonald, & Sobsey, 2003). Additionally, general education teachers should have an understanding of how to teach self-management techniques to students with disabilities to assist with functioning in the classroom (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996) as well as promoting self-determination in the student (King-Sears, 1997).

Accommodations

Providing accommodations and modifications to students has been found to be a needed practice for inclusion of students with disabilities. Gelzheiser et al. (2002) described how teachers utilized a number of inclusive practices, including that of accommodations and modifications. Gelzheiser et al. (2002) interviewed 52 inclusive general education teachers who taught a total of 22 different students with diverse disabilities. These teachers represented both core content area teachers and elective teachers at the elementary, middle, and high school levels. The researchers sought out to understand the patterns of integration or inclusive practices that these teachers used. The authors found that the teachers reported using specific modifications for students with disabilities. Specifically, teachers provided modifications to seating, directions, instruction, testing, and assignments for their students with disabilities.

Differentiating instruction is known to be a key component of a successful inclusion classroom (King-Sears, 1997). Through her discussion on differentiated instruction, King-Sears explained that effectively differentiating instruction can depend on the following: 1) the amount and quality of training that the teacher has received, 2) how willing the teacher is to do so, and 3) the quantity and quality of support that the special education teacher is providing. However, general education teachers may fear that they cannot successfully accommodate included students with disabilities without significant pull-out support from a special education service provider (Cook & Friend, 1990).

This fear that teachers experience could be due to a lack of preparation on how best to provide accommodations and modifications for individual student learning. General education preparation programs generally focus on overall achievement for the entire student group, rather than focusing on individualizing learning for students (Kling & Banit, 1996). Coombs-Richardson & Mead (2001) pointed out that although techniques for accommodation are known, “few general educators have received the training necessary to adapt their instruction to maximize students’ achievement” (p. 383). Further, Soodak et al.’s (1998) study implies that training in differentiating teaching practices can impact a teacher’s receptivity to the inclusion of students with disabilities. Directly put, Spinelli (1998) stated that pre-service teachers should receive training that result in the possession of skill in modifying materials and curriculum for effective instruction of students with different needs.

Academic Interventions

General education teachers must be able to implement academic interventions for students who are struggling, including students with disabilities that are included in their classroom. King-Sears & Cummings (1996) noted that general education teachers need training that prepares them to effectively carry out academic interventions. The authors recommend that this training should include: “an awareness of techniques from which to choose,...preparation in how to use new techniques,...practice that results in a comfortable level of implementation, ...and support while they begin to implement the new techniques” (p. 1). These training components are needed for teachers as part of their pre-service preparation program.

Direct instruction has been found to be successful in teaching content to students with disabilities (King-Sears & Cummings, 1996; King-Sears, 1997). With direct instruction, teachers explicitly teach the content. Mercer, Jordan, and Miller (1996) describe the explicit instruction as following six steps of lesson introduction, describing or modeling the skill, scaffolding the guided practice, including independent practice, providing feedback, and teaching to allow for generalization of the skill. However, general education preparation programs often teach constructivism, which is a philosophy that conflicts with that of direct instruction. Students with disabilities may have difficulty in learning in a classroom based on constructivist principles, due to the many demands that are placed on the student, whereas with direct instruction the student receives instruction directly from the teacher expert (Mercer et al., 1996). It is important, then, that general education teacher preparation programs include information and practice on direct, explicit instruction as well as other teaching methodologies.

Communication and Collaboration

An additional area included in the literature for optimal teacher training is communication and collaboration (Spinelli, 1998; Van Laarhoven et al., 2007; Voltz & Elliott, 1997). General education teachers must collaborate with special education teachers or service providers in order to adequately meet the needs of their special education. General education teachers have reported a need for training in effective collaboration (Heflin & Bullock, 1999). Cook and Friend (1990) recommended assisting teachers in the development of communication skills, such that interactions with other professionals in consultative exchanges will be positive and productive. King-Sears

(1997) agreed that collaboration is necessary for effective inclusion, while Van Laarhoven et al. (2007) advocated for not only training on collaboration, but also opportunities to collaborate with special education peers during pre-service teacher training. It is known, then, that collaboration and communication are important skills to be included in pre-service training programs.

Field-based Experiences

In-the-field experiences with diverse students, including students with disabilities, are an important component of pre-service general education teacher training (Van Laarhoven et al., 2007). Pre-service teachers report that even when they knew that they would be teaching students with disabilities, they were not prepared to teach these students (Cook, 2002). Kling and Banit (1996) similarly reported that in-service teachers believe that they need more opportunities to observe inclusive practices, and to interact with other teachers and share ideas that they have about inclusion. Field-based experiences in classrooms with students with disabilities, where students explicitly know they are teaching students with disabilities, and where the pre-service teachers could collaborate with others are crucial. These experiences would likely better prepare teachers to include students with disabilities in their future classrooms.

Grouping

An additional area necessary in teacher preparation programs is instruction regarding grouping of the students. Cooperative learning, one important grouping method, is usually implemented through grouping mixed-ability students together, such that stronger students can provide support for students who might struggle (Evertson et

al., 2006). Cooperative grouping is one instructional strategy which facilitates successful inclusion of students with disabilities (King-Sears, 1997; King-Sears & Cummings, 1996). Another suggestion by King-Sears and Cummings is to use class-wide peer tutoring in inclusive classrooms. The authors stated that peer tutoring allows for students to practice social skills and engage in academic tasks, among other benefits.

Gelzheiser et al. (2002) mentioned that general education teachers, interviewed and observed in teaching students with disabilities in an inclusive classroom, used a variety of grouping strategies. These strategies included the following: large-group ensemble (whole-group creates one product), large-group discussion, large-group parallel independent practice, large-group practice, small-group ensemble, small-group stations, small-group discussion, small-group parallel independent practice, and individual instruction. By preparing pre-service teachers for effective use of a variety of student grouping types, teachers are more likely to be prepared to utilize this instructional management practice in their classes that include students with significant cognitive disabilities.

Assessment

One final area in which training is necessary is that of assessment. King-Sears & Cummings (1996) as well as King-Sears (1997) stated that curriculum-based assessment is a tool needed by general education teachers in order to facilitate inclusion. Commonly, special education pre-service teachers are instructed in student assessment. However, general education pre-service teachers receive preparation that is content specific (Brownell et al., 2005). General education teachers undoubtedly will have students in

their classrooms with varying disabilities. These teachers must also have an understanding of how to assess their students appropriately, through different means. Cook (2002) recommended that general educators be trained in a variety of assessment techniques that are known to be effective with student with a variety of disabilities. Similarly, Spinelli (1998) advocated for pre-service teachers to be trained in a variety alternative assessment measures in order to meet all students' needs.

Summary

In summary, research has clearly identified effective classroom management as a critical set of pedagogical skills that a teacher must possess for students to obtain maximum educational benefits. Further, research has described how inclusion of students with significant disabilities can be a successful and beneficial practice. Inclusion of students with diverse ability levels undoubtedly adds managerial dimensions to inclusive classrooms. Research has identified a number of key elements necessary to prepare teachers for both inclusion and for effective classroom management. However, research is lacking on teachers who expertly manage classes that include students with significant cognitive disabilities. The effective management practices and learning strategies of the expert teachers in this study have clear implications for preparation programs that prepare inclusive teachers.

CHAPTER III

METHOD

Context

Instructional practices of general education teachers at the elementary level are distinct from those at the secondary level and the two should be investigated separately (Gelzheiser et al., 2002). For this study, only secondary teachers were studied, specifically those in urban public schools. While many educational factors are common across community types, urban school districts face unique challenges. Typically, urban schools have larger class sizes and the management of large classes is different than that of small classes (Brophy, 2006). In addition, urban districts often create a large number of programs aimed to support students who are low-performing (Pugach & Seidl, 1995) and children with disabilities in urban districts are usually served through one of those specialized programs. However, this study sought out districts and campuses that served students with disabilities in inclusive classrooms, and focused on urban districts as they were more likely to have programs that used an inclusive model.

Ten urban school districts that served the six metropolitan areas of Texas were considered for inclusion in this study. Schools were selected using district-level information provided to the Texas Education Agency (TEA) through the Public Education Information Management System (PEIMS). This database reported the number of 12 through 21 year old special education students by their primary disability and reported the district in which they were served. In addition to the disability group information, the TEA report file provided information on different types of instructional

settings for students receiving special education. Levels of instructional settings reported included: (a) homebound, (b) hospital class, (c) mainstream, (d) no instructional setting, (e) nonpublic day school, (f) residential nonpublic school, (g) state school, and (h) vocational adjustment class / program. As the focus of this study was to explore inclusive strategies of general educators, only districts that reported serving special education students in mainstream instructional settings were included as part of this study.

Inclusion is implemented more frequently for students with less severe disabilities, such as learning disabilities or speech impairments (U.S. Department of Education, 2006). Further, students with multiple disabilities or physical disabilities do not necessarily have intellectual disabilities. Thus, only districts that reported enrollment of students with autism, intellectual disability, and traumatic brain injury were selected as this study had as its focus students with significant intellectual disabilities.

In addition, only districts that reported having five or more students with either autism, intellectual disability, or traumatic brain injury in the mainstream setting were used to recruit participants as district-level information was concealed when those total student numbers were less than five. Further, only those districts that had students representing at least two of these three disability groups were included, as it was the intent of this study was to interview teachers in schools that implemented inclusive practices cross-categorically.

Thus, the selection of participants was filtered as follows:

1. Those in urban school districts,

2. Districts that reported serving the disability groups of traumatic brain injury, intellectual disability, and autism,
3. Districts that had student counts by disability of five or larger, and
4. Districts that reported serving more than one disability group in inclusive settings.

After this filtering process was completed, only two districts in Texas remained, both of which were large urban districts. I contacted both districts with a request to conduct this study. Only one of these districts gave consent to allow data collection with its teachers. This district represented a total of 74 middle and high school campuses. Within this participating district, a total of 42 students between the ages of 12-21 with intellectual disability, autism, and traumatic brain injury received services in the mainstream instructional setting. As a whole, this district had enrollment of 86,259 middle and high school students in the 2006-2007 school year. Thus, the 42 mainstreamed students with significant cognitive disabilities represented .0487% of the secondary population as a whole.

Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) data from the Texas Education Agency (2009) website was accessed on each of these campuses. Only campuses that were rated by the state as acceptable, recognized, or exemplary for both the 2005-2006 and 2006-2007 academic years were included in this study. Campuses that were rated as unacceptable or that were not rated for one or both of those years were not included in this study. As the intent of the study was to learn about successful inclusion practices, only campuses that were rated acceptable or higher were included. After this further

filtration was completed, a total of 35 secondary campuses remained, eleven of which were high schools and twenty-four were middle schools. These campuses were then used to recruit the expert secondary general education teachers, who were the focus of this study.

Campus principals were contacted to gain approval for the research to be conducted on their campus. This process continued until all principals were contacted by at least two different means (e-mail, telephone, and/or in-person), and at least three contact attempts were made. Of the 35 potential campuses for this study, 12 principals granted permission to contact teachers on their campus. Twenty-one principals did not respond to contact attempts, and two principals declined participation either because they did not have an inclusion program on their campus or there was a lack of students with significant disabilities on their campus. The remaining 12 participating campuses included 4 high schools and 8 middle schools. Only once a campus principal granted permission to conduct the study, were nominations of expert teachers sought.

Participants

The 12 campuses that resulted from the above described selection process were contacted to recruit expert general education teacher participants. For the purpose of this study, participants were selected purposefully using the expert criteria as described by Palmer, Stough, Burdenski, and Gonzales (2005). Based on a review of studies on the construct of expertise in teaching, Palmer et al. (2005) recommended rigorous criteria to identify expert teachers. The authors conducted a meta-analysis of 27 unique studies in order to determine how educational researchers identify expertise in teachers. Based on

their analysis, Palmer et al. suggested that in research studies teachers who are selected as expert should meet the following criteria:

1. At least three recent years of teaching experience in the same context in which the teacher is an considered expert,
2. Expertise which is confirmed by two or more different individuals,
3. Documented impact on student performance
4. Possession of both teaching certification and a degree appropriate for the subject area in which they were considered an expert

Nomination Process

In order to contact these teachers, the campus level special education department heads or instructional leaders at the selected urban district were contacted via telephone. In some instances, an e-mail message was sent if I was unable to gain contact through the telephone. For campuses that did not have a special education department head or team leader, or where the special education department head was unavailable, the assistant principal was contacted.

The department heads were requested to nominate regular education teachers who (a) were effective in meeting the needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities within the general education setting, (b) had at least three recent years of teaching experience in their current teaching assignment, and (c) had positive impact on student achievement of the special education students included in their classroom. During the phone conversation with the department head, I recorded information about the nominated teacher(s) on a data collection form (see Appendix A), as well as any

additional comments that the department head made at the time of nomination. All of these nominations were then confirmed by a campus instructional leader.

Years of Teaching Experience

In order to be selected as an expert teacher for this study, the nominated teacher had to have at least three years of teaching experience in their nominated teaching context, as well as at least three years of teaching experience with the inclusion of students with significant intellectual disabilities (Palmer et al., 2005). These selection criteria were used as part of the department head nomination process. Some of this information was later confirmed through a demographic questionnaire I emailed to the individual teacher.

Teaching Certification

Information regarding the teacher's certification was accessed through public records available through the Texas State Board for Educator Certification (2008a) website. This website provided a listing of all teaching certifications awarded in the state and individual certifications could be checked by individual teacher name. In order for the teacher to have been selected as a participant in this study, the certification(s) held must have included the secondary level and in the content area in which the teacher is currently teaching. For example, a teacher with certification in English language arts and reading (grades 8-12) or technology education (grades 6-12) who had taught in that setting for at least three years would have met criteria for this study.

Peer Professionals Nomination

All special education department head nominations were confirmed through content-area department head teacher, content area assistant principal, or dean of instruction nominations. In addition to the special education department head, I additionally contacted the general education content-area department head or instructional leader in the content area of the nominated expert teacher. Many times the assistant principal or dean of instruction served as this instructional leader. Nominations from these professionals were then compared to the special education department head nomination received on the same teacher. Only if the two nominations concurred, was the teacher nominated subsequently contacted to participate in this study. Similar confirmatory nominations have been used in other studies on teacher expertise (i.e., Stough & Palmer, 2003). In the event that the department heads did not nominate the same individual(s), the teacher(s) nominated were removed from consideration for participation in this study.

Documented Impact

Palmer et al. (2005) stated that in order for a teacher to be recognized as an exemplary teacher, there should be, “confirmed and documented evidence of teacher impact on student performance,” (p. 23). However, due to the right to privacy required by Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), teacher-level data that includes assessment information for students with disabilities is not public record. FERPA further requires schools to protect student educational records, unless express written permission is provided by the parent (U.S. Department of Education, 2007b). Due to the

unavailability of specific student achievement data for these students, nominations from department heads and instructional leaders were used to select teachers who had demonstrated positive academic impact on their students. It should be noted that this nomination procedure has been used in a number of studies on teacher expertise and is a well-accepted sampling procedure by researchers in the area of teacher expertise (e.g., Berliner, 1986; Palmer et al., 2005).

For this study, 21 teachers were nominated by a special education department head. Two of these 21 teachers did not receive confirmed nominations from their instructional heads. Of the remaining 19 teachers, nine agreed to participate in the study; however one of these teachers had recently changed teaching content areas. Given this content area change, the teacher did not meet expert criteria as described by Palmer et al. (2005). Thus, a total of 8 teachers who met the above criteria were eligible to be interviewed. A priority in selection was to obtain a group of teachers that expertly managed secondary classes in well-performing campuses, where students with significant intellectual disabilities were included. A further aim was to obtain a cross-section of teachers so that diverse perspectives were included.

Based on the 2007-2008 Academic Excellence Indicator System (AEIS) State Profile, 9.6% of Texas teachers were African American, 21.4% were Hispanic, 67.5% were White, .3% were Native American, and 1.2% were Asian/Pacific Islander. Males accounted for 22.8%, while females accounted for 77.2% of Texas teachers during the 2007-2008 academic year, which was the last year this data was available (TEA, 2009). Data from the state on teachers by ethnicity was not available for only the secondary

level; the data presented is for all teachers within the state. The teacher participants in this study included five White teachers (62.5%) and three African American teachers (37.5%). Roughly mirroring the current demographics of Texas teachers, five of these teachers were females (62.5%) and three were males (37.5%).

Design

Data was collected from multiple sources. On the campuses that granted permission to conduct research, a short telephone survey was conducted with each special education department head or leader and content-area department head or leader following the nomination of a general education teacher. In addition, the following data sources were used with the selected general education participants: (a) a preliminary demographic survey, (b) a semi-structured interview, and (c) a follow-up interview. In addition, a telephone survey was conducted with the special education teacher that worked most closely with each general education teacher. The steps used for data collection are displayed below in Table 1, and each of these data collection methods are described in detail in the following sections.

Table 1

Data Collection Steps Completed

Step One	Gained district level Internal Review Board permissions.
Step Two	Gained campus principal permission.
Step Three	Contacted special education department heads or leaders by phone to get expert teacher nomination.

Table 1 continued

Step Four	Contacted content area department heads or leaders by phone to get confirmation of expert teacher nominations.
Step Five	E-mailed prospective expert teachers to request participation in the study.
Step Six	Contacted willing expert teachers to schedule interview and gather name of special education teaching peer.
Step Seven	E-mailed demographic information request to participating expert teachers.
Step Eight	Contacted and conducted phone survey with special education teaching peers.
Step Nine	Conducted interviews with expert teachers.
Step Ten	Completed transcription of interviews.
Step Eleven	Conducted member-checking with the expert teachers and conducted follow-up interviews.

Data Collection from the Special Education and Content-Area Department Heads

During the nomination phone call with each department head, they were asked a short list of questions regarding reasons for their nomination. These questions were designed to confirm that the teacher was an expert at including students with significant intellectual disabilities:

1. Does this teacher have at least three recent years of teaching experience in their current teaching assignment?
2. Does this teacher have at least three recent years of teaching experience including students with significant cognitive disabilities in the classroom?
3. Has this teacher had positive impact on student achievement for the students with significant disabilities that are included in his / her classroom?
4. Has this teacher had positive impact on the social development of the included students with significant intellectual disabilities?
5. Has this teacher had positive impact on the academic development of the included students with significant intellectual disabilities?
6. Is this teacher effective in meeting the needs of students with significant cognitive disabilities within the general education setting?
7. Would you consider this teacher an expert in managing an inclusive classroom?

As the department heads responded to the questions, I took notes on their responses.

These notes were later recorded in a database for analysis. Additional comments made by the department heads or leaders were also noted and later re-typed for analysis.

Data Collection from Expert General Education Teachers

Teacher nominations were confirmed using the criteria as suggested by Palmer et al. (2005). Teachers were contacted by e-mail and asked if they would be willing to participate in the study. For those teachers agreeing to participate, a time and location for

an interview to take place was scheduled via phone. During this phone call, the teacher also was asked to provide the name of the special education teacher on the campus with whom she or he most closely worked. The identified special education teacher was then contacted for an interview through a separate phone call.

Demographic information. Following the telephone contact with the expert teacher, an e-mail requesting demographic information was sent (see Appendix B). Information requested included questions regarding age, ethnicity, current teaching position, and years of teaching experience.

Semi-structured interview. In alignment with Riessman's (1993) suggestions, semi-structured interviews were conducted, wherein the interviewer used an interview protocol with predetermined questions to be asked (see Appendix C). For these questions, all participants were asked to respond to the same questions (Berg, 2004). However, as the interview progressed, the interviewer asked probes that further clarified, extended, or aided in gathering a complete response from the respondent. The interviewer thus had "freedom to digress", to probe beyond the answers that the participants provided in order to receive a fully elaborated response (Berg, 2004, p.81). The 11 structured questions that were used as part of the interview protocol follow:

1. Talk me through a normal day with one of your students with significant intellectual disabilities.
2. What type of management strategies do you use in order to effectively include this student in your classroom?

3. How is planning for the classes that include students with significant disabilities different from planning for other classes?
4. How do you manage classroom instruction in your classes with students with significant disabilities?
5. Do you use preventative strategies to manage your classroom? Tell me about this.
6. Explain how you manage time in your inclusive classrooms.
7. Talk to me about how you manage people for effective inclusion.
8. Tell me about a time when you feel you effectively managed a class that included a student with a significant intellectual disability.
9. What prepares a teacher to work with children with special education needs?
10. How did you learn to be an effective classroom manager for students with significant intellectual disabilities?

(Used prompts: teacher preparation program, course on classroom management, course on special education, professional development, collaboration with special education, mentoring, and experiences that were particularly useful or meaningful)
11. Is there anything else that you would like to add?

Tape recordings of all interviews were made and were transcribed. All utterances and words were included in the transcripts for analysis. In addition, field notes were taken before, during, and following each interview. The interviewer also made detailed

descriptions of the environmental surroundings of the teacher's classroom (Berg, 2004). Classroom arrangement, material availability, and organization were noted. A sketch of the classroom layout was made when interviews occurred in the classroom (Berg, 2004). During the interview, body language, nonverbal signals, and emphasis in speech were noted in the field notes. All field notes were transcribed and used to provide a context for the particular teacher being interviewed.

Analysis of audiotapes. After listening to the audiotape and completing the transcript of an interview, I determined the follow-up questions needed for each particular teacher. These questions were designed to extend previous responses or to collect information that was lacking from the first interview.

Follow-up interview. Teachers were contacted and follow-up interviews were scheduled. These follow-up interviews were completed via telephone at a time convenient to the teacher. One participant asked that the follow-up interview to be held in-person. In that instance, the interview was additionally tape-recorded. Field notes and transcription were completed in the same fashion as described for the first interviews.

Data Collection from the Special Education Teachers

Participating expert general education teachers were asked to identify the special education teacher with whom he or she worked most closely. The special education teacher was then contacted by telephone or e-mail (if unable to be reached via telephone) in order to schedule a structured phone interview. Questions included in the interview were as follows:

1. Do you feel that _____ (general education teacher's name) is effective at including students with significant intellectual disabilities in the classroom?
2. In your opinion, what makes _____ (general education teacher's name) effective?
3. When considering the inclusion of students with significant intellectual disabilities, what does _____ (general education teacher's name) regularly do that is indicative of effective instruction?
4. In your opinion, are students with significant intellectual disabilities successful in his / her classroom?
5. Why do you (or not) think that these students are successful?
6. Tell me about how he / she manages his / her classroom.

As with the department head nomination phone conversation, I wrote down the special education teacher's responses as accurately as possible. These notes were then transcribed and included in the analysis.

Analysis

Data collected through the demographic information were used to describe the participants in this study as a group. Descriptive statistics were calculated on the following variables (a) age, (b) ethnicity, (c) gender, (d) certification areas, (e) year first certification received, (f) current teaching position, (g) years experience in current position, (h) total years teaching experience, and (i) years experience teaching students with significant intellectual disabilities. Five of the teachers were white (62.5%), while

three of the teachers were African American (37.5%). Five teachers were female (62.5%), while the remaining three were males (37.5%).

Teachers held teaching certificates in the following areas: English (2, 25%), Art (2, 25%), Generalist (2, 25%), English as a Second Language (2, 25%), Culinary Arts (1, 12.5%), Spanish (1, 12.5%), Economics (1, 12.5%), and History/Social Studies (1, 12.5%). The teachers' current teaching placements were in the following areas: English/Language Arts (3, 37.5%), Social Studies (2, 25%), Art – Visual (2, 25%), and Culinary Arts (1, 12.5%). Table 2 below displays additional descriptive statistics of the participant demographic information.

Table 2
Participant Demographic Information

	Age	Year 1 st certified	Years in current position	Total years of teaching experience	Years w/ stud. w/ sign. int. disabilities
Range	30-72	1975-2005	3-19	3-30	3-23
Average	48	1992	8.63	14.38	8.14
Median	48	1989	8.5	13.5	5

Research Question #1

To answer research question #1, “What are the classroom management decisions and classroom management practices of expert general education secondary teachers of student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?” several analysis steps were taken.

First, notes transcribed from the department heads' nominations were analyzed for what management decisions and practices the department heads identify. Specifically, responses from the following questions were analyzed:

1. In what ways has this teacher had a positive impact on student achievement?
2. What makes this teacher an expert in managing students with significant intellectual disabilities?

A second data source for research question #1 came from the structured telephone interviews conducted with the special education teachers. Transcribed notes from these interviews were analyzed for evidence of management decisions and practices in which the expert regular education teacher engaged. Specifically, the following interview questions provided pertinent information:

1. In your opinion, what makes _____ (general education teacher's name) effective at including students with significant intellectual disabilities in the classroom?
2. When considering the inclusion of students with significant intellectual disabilities, what does _____ (general education teacher's name) regularly do that other teachers on your campus might not do?
3. Tell me about he / she manages his / her classroom.

An additional data source that was used to answer research question #1 was the transcription of the interviews with the general education teachers. Several interview questions provided data on the teachers' management decisions and practices:

1. Talk me through a normal day with one of your students with significant intellectual disabilities.
2. What type of classroom management strategies do you use in order to effectively include this student in your classroom?
3. How is planning for the classes that include students with significant disabilities different from planning for other classes?

This question was similar to that used by Livingston (1989) when interviewing both novice and expert teachers.

4. How do you manage classroom instruction in your classes with students with significant disabilities?
5. Do you use preventative strategies to manage your classroom? Tell me about this.
6. Explain how you manage time in your inclusive classrooms.
7. Talk to me about how you manage people for effective inclusion.
8. Tell me about a time when you feel you effectively managed a class that included a student with a significant intellectual disability.

Each transcript was then analyzed to describe the expert general education teachers' management decision making and practices.

Research Question #2

To answer research question #2 “How do expert secondary teachers learn to manage classrooms that include student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?” the following analysis were conducted. This research question was explored through the interviews completed with the general education teacher. The following pre-determined questions were analyzed for their data on teacher preparation in managing a classroom that includes students(s) with significant intellectual disabilities:

1. What prepares a teacher to work with children with special education needs? (Adapted from Whitney, Golez, Nagel, and Nieto, 2002.)
2. How well did your teacher preparation program accomplish that task? (Adapted from Whitney et al., 2002.)
3. How did you learn to manage an inclusive classroom?

Transcripts of all data sources that resulted in open-ended responses were analyzed through qualitative methods. Specifically, the constant-comparative approach, as described by Lincoln and Guba (1985), was utilized. Data processing and analysis steps of unitizing, coding, and categorizing were completed. Coding of data included the data source, type of respondent, site, and episode information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A sample of such coding is as follows: HSDHMS5-15-08-03-80. This example indicates the district name, respondent type, campus level, subject area, date, and teacher number. Coding was utilized in order to maintain confidentiality of those who participated in the study.

Units of data from the interviews were heuristic and used the smallest portion of information that was interpretable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These data units were each printed on individual index cards, such that they were easily maneuvered during the categorization process. This process followed Berg's (2004) suggested procedure of reducing and transforming data such that they will be easier to access and understand. See Figure 1 for a visual display of the analysis that was done.

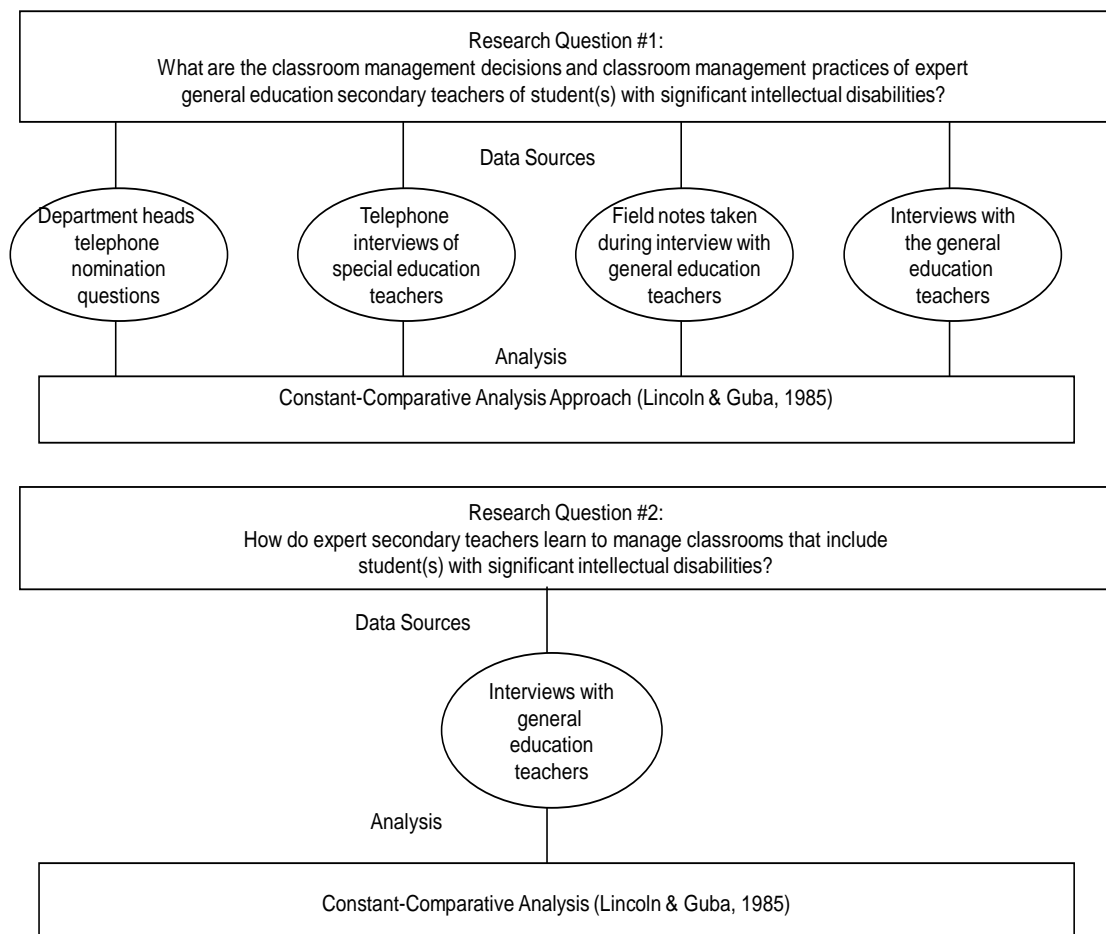


Figure 1. Analysis completed for research questions #1 and #2.

Categorization of the data units was completed in order to analyze the data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Categorization consisted of sorting the data units as themes emerged. Through the categorization process, attention was paid to themes and patterns that surfaced (Berg, 2004). Patterns presented themselves as similarities and differences in the data (Berg, 2004). Results have been presented as themes in the inclusive classroom management decisions and practices that these expert teachers exhibited.

Study Trustworthiness

Several steps were taken during the study to ensure trustworthiness. Trustworthiness was established through the quality study aspects of credibility, confirmability, and transferability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The following paragraphs will detail the ways in which credibility, confirmability, and transferability were established.

Credibility. Three steps were taken to ensure study credibility. The first of which was the process of peer debriefing. During peer debriefing, I engaged in an analytic session with a disinterested peer “for the purpose of exploring aspects of the inquiry that might otherwise remain only implicit” in my mind (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 308). The three peer debriefing sessions, which lasted approximately one hour each, included discussion of the management categories that had been created, as well as several key units of data within each of these categories. Peer debriefing sessions also included discussion on the alignment of management categories with universal design for learning. These peer debriefing session allowed me to verify categories developed,

explore meanings, probe my own biases, test out working hypotheses, and clarify the basis for interpretations. Written records of peer debriefing were kept as an audit trail (Lincoln & Guba).

Additionally, member checks with the teachers were conducted, such that the teachers were able to correct any errors, confirm statements, and provide an assessment of representation adequacy (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Importantly, member checking allowed for the teachers to confirm intentions and react to my interpretations (Lincoln & Guba). Member checking was done with teachers after the transcript had been typed and once interpretations had been rendered. Teachers were e-mailed their transcription and then asked to return via e-mail text or on the document itself any corrections or additions that they would like to make on the transcriptions. Two teachers made a one word change. The remaining teachers made no changes to their transcript.

Finally, in all possible instances, triangulation of data was completed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). One way of accomplishing triangulation was by using multiple sources of data (Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Yin, 1994). Triangulation of data allows for improved probability of credible study interpretations (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). I was able to triangulate data on the classroom management decisions and practices that the expert teachers engaged in through use of multiple informational sources (ie., the special education teacher, the general education teacher, and the department heads or leaders).

Confirmability. In order to allow for study confirmability, an audit trail was maintained (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). The audit trail for this study included audio-recordings of interviews, field notes, documents, peer debriefing notes, data analysis cards, interview forms, and personal notes that were made (Lincoln & Guba, 1985).

Transferability. In order to allow for readers to determine if interpretations from this study were transferable, thick description has been provided (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Descriptions of the context in which the teachers instructed their students were written from field notes taken before, during, and after interviews with the teachers. Additional information to add to the thick description was written based on the contexts described by the teachers in their interviews with me.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The Expert Teachers of This Study

Before describing the management practices and decisions of the expert teachers in this study, an introduction to each of them is provided below. Information about each teacher has been given to portray their experience levels, learning environment, and demographic information. A summary of each teacher's demographic information is provided in Table 3, along with the pseudonym that will be used throughout the remainder of this results section. Following the table, a thick description of each unique teacher and his or her background has been provided to acquaint the reader with the teachers.

The average age of the teachers was 48, with an average of just over 14 years of teaching experience. As this group of teachers were experts, they were also a group that had more years of teaching experience. Together, their average number of years of experience in working with students with significant intellectual disabilities was just over eight years. The subject areas of these teachers were language arts (3 teachers), social studies (2 teachers), visual arts (2 teachers), and culinary arts (1 teacher). Each of the teachers only taught one subject area, yet taught multiple class periods of that particular subject. Five of the teachers were white; three were African American. Three were males, and the remaining five were females. In the United States, female teachers far outnumber males at the elementary level, however at the secondary level this discrepancy is not as large (U.S. Department of Education, 2000). Given that this study

was of secondary teachers, this proportion of male versus female teachers was reasonable, as more males tend to teach secondary than elementary. Two teachers taught at the high school level (grades 9-12) and six taught at the middle school level (grades 6-8).

Given that art is a subject area in which students with disabilities are often included in the general education curriculum and classroom, it was not unexpected that several (three) of the teachers in this study taught some form of an art elective course. Similarly, since math and science are often considered to be challenging courses at the secondary level, it was not surprising to me that no teachers in this study on inclusive management taught those subject areas.

Table 3
Expert Teachers

Teacher	Age	Ethnicity	Grade level(s)	Subject area	Years experience
Tim	72	White	6–8	Art	19
Karen	30	White	8	English	8
Tisha	45	African American	8	English	24
Vicky	55	White	8	History	30
Janice	50	White	9-12	Visual Arts	23
Laura	58	African American	6	Language Arts	3
Kyle	39	African American	9-12	Culinary Arts	4
Louis	33	White	6	Social Studies	4

Tim

Tim, a 72 year old White male, earned his teaching certificate in all-level art (pre-kindergarten through 12th grade) in 1989. He had taught art for 19 years at the middle school level. He gained those years of teaching experience through working at two different middle school campuses. For ten of those 19 years, Tim had experience in teaching students with significant intellectual disabilities. As Tim was an art teacher, rather than a core content area teacher, Tim had many students with disabilities included in his classes as an elective each year. Throughout the interviews with me, when speaking about the students with significant cognitive disabilities that he worked with, he often reflected on two students with whom he had worked over the past two years. Both were students with autism, one he described as lower-functioning, while the other he described as a student who had difficulty in grasping abstract concepts.

Prior to teaching in the public school, Tim taught art at the university level and took an early retirement. Tim commented that from his work at the university, he had learned that it was important to try to reach every student and not just “blow someone away” (Field Notes, 5-30-08). After moving to his current urban home, he found joy in teaching middle school after being asked by a district administrator to serve as a long-term substitute in an art class. Once there, he said that he was “hooked” and was hired as the art teacher. Tim’s class was one of only two classrooms that I was able to visit while students were present. The atmosphere in his classroom was fun, relaxed, yet seemed very productive. Students were listening to music playing on Tim’s radio while they worked on their art. Students were seated in groups throughout the classroom, at tall art

tables. Tim made it a point to show me the sculpture that a group of his students had created, which was in the atrium directly outside of the back door to his classroom.

It was apparent that Tim enjoyed his work with his students and enjoyed his work with art. Outside of teaching, Tim was also a professional artist and had created sculptures that he had shown at numerous art shows. For the follow-up interview that I conducted with him, he requested that I visit his art workshop and do the interview in-person rather than via phone. I was happy to comply with his request, as this provided me with a greater opportunity to learn more about Tim. He had obvious pride in his artwork, and even pointed out artwork that his students had done that was now housed in the front yard of his art studio.

Karen

Karen was a 30 year old White female who taught at the same campus as Tim. As an 8th grade English teacher, she taught some of the same students as did Tim. Karen earned her teaching certification in secondary English (grades 6-12) in 2000 after completing a Bachelors degree in education. In 2008, she earned additional certification in learning resources (librarian) for grades PK-12. Karen had 8 years teaching experience, with the last three years including students with significant intellectual disabilities. During our interviews, Karen reflected on a number of students with disabilities who had been included in her classrooms. Karen mentioned having taught students with autism, intellectual disabilities, learning disabilities, and physical impairments. She mentioned that she often was the teacher on her campus who was most willing to accept and include students with autism in her classroom, as some of the other

teachers struggled with teaching students with different behaviors. She had developed confidence in working with students with autism. The following statement demonstrated her comfort, “I guess that’s kind of why I like having the uh, kids with autism, because I know, like it’s easy... you know what’s wrong, and you know how to deal with it” (T02, 282).

I was introduced to Karen by one of the assistant principals on the campus who had nominated Karen as an expert teacher for this study. We met right outside her classroom, which was full of 8th grade students. We conducted the first interview in Karen’s classroom, which was well organized, clean, and consisted of desks in columns and rows. It was apparent, after viewing her classroom layout, and then after talking with her, that Karen ran a very structured classroom. She obviously had rules and procedures that she implemented consistently. Yet, as she described it, she had a sort of “weird” relationship with her students, where they knew that they would work and behave while in her classroom, yet she could joke around with them and they would enjoy their time in her room. It seemed that she was a teacher who took her job seriously, developed rapport with her students, and expected all students in her class to succeed.

Karen’s educational background, as she described it, had not really prepared her for inclusion. In her teacher preparation program, she learned about individual education plans (IEPs), behavior intervention plans (BIPs), and inclusion. However, she stated that she had not learned how to “work with the kids. Not situations. Not strategies” (Follow-up Interview Field Notes, 8-27-08). As she explained, she had received no further training from her district on inclusive practices.

Tisha

Tisha was the other teacher, in addition to Tim, whom I interviewed in a location other than the classroom. She and I met at a coffee shop near her home to conduct the face-to-face interview. Tisha was a 45 year old African American female who had taught for 24 years. Her current position was a middle school 8th grade English classroom, where she had taught for 10 years. Tisha earned her initial teaching certifications in 1984, both in secondary English (grades 6-12) and secondary Spanish. She later earned an additional certification in English as a second language (grades 6-12). Out of her 24 years of teaching experience, eight of those years were working with students with significant intellectual disabilities. Tisha spoke about having taught students with a number of different disabilities, including learning disabilities, Asperger's Syndrome, intellectual disability, autism, communication impairments, and seizure disorders. When responding to interview questions, Tisha reflected on many of the different students who she had taught.

Tisha explained that her pre-service teacher preparation program had prepared her for classroom management but not for working with students with disabilities. Since her pre-service program, Tisha had attended numerous workshops, dealing with special education topics such as adequately applying modifications, differentiation, and behavior plans (Follow-up Interview Notes, 8-8-08). However, she was unaware if any professional development opportunities were currently available from her district on classroom management topics. More recently, Tisha had enrolled in a university course on inclusion to learn more about inclusion programs. As she explained, she used that

information to evaluate the process that her school was experiencing in trying to implement an inclusive program.

One thing made clear by Tisha in her interview was that she felt that part of her success in managing a middle school class was in the way that she was able to relate to her students. She understood the age group and aligned her expectations with the maturity level that she knew they possessed. She used motivational strategies, and even a made up character, “imaginary Peter,” in her lessons to relate to her students and keep them engaged. She described herself as sometimes being a bit peculiar, and using “imaginary Peter” was one example of this. Tisha explained that by being a bit peculiar, this allowed her to relate well with her students when they knew she was “kind of out there” (T03, 214-215).

Vicky

Vicky, a 55 year old White female, was an 8th grade History teacher with 30 years of teaching experience. She taught on the same campus as did Tisha and shared some of the same students with Tisha. Vicky first earned her teaching certification in 1975, in the areas of secondary economics (grades 6-12) and secondary history (grades 6-12). She later earned certification in secondary social studies composite (grades 6-12). Although Vicky had 30 years of teaching experience, 12 of which were in her current position, she had only 5 years of experience in teaching students with significant intellectual disabilities. Vicky discussed having taught students with a number of different disabilities, including autism, Asperger’s Syndrome, emotional disturbance, traumatic brain injury, intellectual disability, and cerebral palsy.

Vicky's educational background included both a Bachelor's degree and a Master's degree in education. While working on her Master's degree, Vicky served as a substitute teacher. She attributed much of her learning about classroom management to her on-the-job training as a substitute teacher. Beyond this, Vicky attended numerous professional development opportunities over the years, many of which were related to history or social studies. In fact, Vicky had provided a workshop to other teachers in her district on inclusion, where she served as a resource on the role of the general education teacher for inclusion.

Vicky and I met at a university in her home town, where she was attending a content-related professional development workshop series. We found a table in a semi-quiet location where we could conduct the interview immediately following her workshop. Vicky, herself, had a physical disability. She mentioned that her movements were slower when she walked. As a result, her strategies in management and including students with disabilities took her own needs into consideration. One example of this was her decision to place one student who needed frequent supervision close to the front of the room, which made him near to her. By doing this, she did not have to walk around the classroom as much to provide him with the supervision and monitoring that he needed.

Janice

As a 50 year old art teacher, Janice possessed 23 years of teaching experience. She earned her teaching certification in 1986, in all level art (grades PK-12). Janice was a white female who had taught in her current position for nine years and had instructed

students with significant intellectual disabilities in her general education art classroom throughout her entire teaching experience. This was rare, as most teachers in this study had more years of teaching experience in general than they did in working with students with significant intellectual disabilities. Janice had experience in working with students with a variety of disabilities, both before and during her professional teaching career. She had worked with students with autism, intellectual disabilities, Down syndrome, hearing impairments, visual impairments, and physical disabilities.

Janice's educational experiences, as she described them, came from numerous sources. She had earned her Bachelor's degree, which included courses that she believed were important in preparing her for inclusive classroom management. Beyond this, she participated in numerous workshops, primarily focusing on art, but some which discussed art instruction for students with disabilities. One important educational experience for Janice occurred prior to beginning her teaching career, while she was an undergraduate student working as a volunteer, helping students with developmental delays progress in their fine and gross motor skills.

When Janice and I completed her face-to-face interview, I met her in her classroom, where she was ending the day teaching a summer school art class. The students had been doing pottery work while listening to the teacher's radio. They were all very content and busy cleaning up their stations and getting ready to leave for the day. It appeared that Janice, herself, had been immersed in working with the students with their pottery, as she had an apron on that was covered in white mixture. During the interview, it was apparent that Janice was a welcoming individual, with a kind spirit that

held many inclusive beliefs. She explained that she, as a veteran teacher with experience including students with significant disabilities, often had more students with disabilities included in her class than did other teachers.

Laura

Laura was a 58 year old African American female teacher who had just completed her third year of teaching 6th grade Language Arts on a middle school campus. She earned her initial teaching certification in 2005 as a generalist (grades 4-8), then during the following year earned a supplemental certification in English as a second language. Laura chose not to know the specific disability labels of her students, yet she ensured that she knew and implemented their modifications. Laura explained, “I don’t know what their disabilities are. I don’t think it would change my behavior too much if I did know” (T06, 102). She discussed that she did not want to stigmatize, demoralize or single out her students with a disability, so she chose not to know their labels but only their required modifications. Both Laura’s special education teaching peer and administrator explained that Laura had worked with students with autism in her classes for three years.

Prior to teaching, she had worked in business for many years. Janice presented herself to me as a professional, in every regard. She dressed for our interview as if she were attending a job interview, with business attire and a very neat appearance. Her overall demeanor was one of a professional, who took her teaching job and role seriously and responsibly. Following her years of experience in corporate marketing and sales,

Laura decided she wanted a change of career. She chose to enroll in an Alternative Certification Program (ACP) and become a teacher.

Laura's ACP program provided her with an overview of information on Section 504 of the Americans with Disabilities Act, special education, and classroom management, among other things. Since completing this program, Laura had participated in a three-day professional development training program specifically related to successful co-teaching relationships and practices. This program was provided to her and others on her campus, through a private vendor hired by her school district. At the time of the study, Laura was also taking graduate courses towards earning a Master's of Arts degree in teaching. She mentioned taking at least one course which discussed the different theories regarding classroom management.

The interview with Laura was held in her classroom, where all materials were neatly organized and put away. Her desks were in columns in rows, but halved, such that half of the desks were on one side of the room and the other half was on the other side of the room. The two halves faced one another, with space in the middle for the teacher's overhead projector and walking space. During the interview, we both sat in student desks, where she turned her desk close to mine, facing me. All communications from Laura were thoughtful and purposeful. She thought about the questions I asked before responding, and made sure to clarify and elaborate. She told me that she wanted to provide well developed answers, such that the results of this study could potentially benefit future teachers who would need to manage an inclusive classroom. Interestingly, the signature line on Laura's e-mail communications with me was "Just Believe". This

seemed a fitting motto for her given her drive to allow all students in her classroom to be successful.

Kyle

Kyle, a 39 year old African American male, taught culinary arts at a large, urban high school. In his program, he typically taught his students for more than one year in this program that prepared students to become chefs or work in the food-service industry. His approach, as he explained it, in working with his students with significant disabilities, was to prepare the students for cooking that they would need to do in their own lives at homes. The campus where Kyle taught also served as a regional school for the deaf, so Kyle's classes many times also included students with hearing impairments as well as a deaf education interpreter. In addition, being a large class with a cooking lab, Kyle also had a general education teaching assistant in his classes each day.

Prior to his teaching for the last four years, Kyle served as a restaurant manager at a number of different eating establishments, from five-star dining to casual dining. He earned a bachelor's degree in hotel and restaurant management, with a minor in culinary arts (T07, 311). This training prepared him for managing restaurants, and he later became certified to teach based partly on this experience in the profession. The Texas Education Agency's State Board of Educator Certification has specific requirements for career and technology (CATE) certification. This includes skill and experience in the area of certification as well as completion of an approved educator preparation program (State Board for Educator Certification, 2008b). It is through these means that Kyle

became certified, with an advanced technical certificate, to teach culinary arts, a part of the high school's CATE program.

The face-to-face interview with Kyle was held in his classroom. He provided me with a tour of the food closets, the cooking lab setting, and the small restaurant that the culinary arts class ran. Kyle seemed to be honored to be considered an expert inclusive classroom manager. Several times during the interview, he reflected on why he might have been chosen by the instructional leaders on his campus and what he regularly did in his classroom that he believed fit the label "expert inclusive classroom management." He discussed that he rarely had any behavior problems in his classroom, and he consistently held high expectations for his students with disabilities. He took all students at the level at they were at and taught them skills necessary and required them to contribute to the class as a whole.

Louis

Louis, a 33 year old, White male served as a Social Studies teacher at the middle school level. He earned his generalist (grades 4-8) teaching certification in 2004. Louis explained that, at request of the special education assistant principal, he served as the teacher of a homeroom class in which many students with disabilities were included. Louis had four years of teaching experience, all of which included teaching students with significant intellectual disabilities. Although Louis explained that he was not very familiar with different medical terms or labels, he had previously worked with students with intellectual disability, dyslexia, and emotional disturbance.

I met Louis during the summer at his campus, where we conducted his interview in his classroom. Because classes were not in session, the desks and chairs were all pushed to one corner of the room. We pulled a student desk for me, where I sat in front of him at his teacher's desk. Although the room was not arranged as it typically was during the school year, Louis chose to rearrange the furniture for me, draw pictures on the board, and point out the way things typically were set up. Louis was a person with a high energy level. He rarely sat still during the interview, but rather was up around the classroom demonstrating for me and talking all the while.

Prior to teaching, Louis had served in the Army for eleven years, earning the rank of Sergeant. He brought with him into the classroom many of the strategies that he had learned in the army, including respectfulness, order, and use of nonverbal communications. He believed that he was a strong classroom manager, and utilized a more authoritative style, which he attributed to his experience in the army. Even in his communications with me, it was evident that his message was strong, loud, and full of meaning. Louis mentioned that his approach to working with students with disabilities was not any different than in working with general education students. He explained, "I don't treat my special ed kids any differently than I do any of my other kids" (T08, 462).

Although his treatment or management expectations for the students with disabilities were not any different, Louis did speak about how he made modifications for them and drew upon their strengths during class participation. Louis further explained that his co-teacher had "free rein" to work with the students with disabilities or make modifications for them in any way she chose, with full autonomy. He discussed his view

of the special education co-teacher as a positive support in the classroom. Louis held this type of positive view of the many adults on the campus, each as a support who had something to offer to his students.

Context

Knowing the particular context of this study is as important as knowing the individual teachers that participated in it. The context for the teachers in this study could be viewed at different levels. At the national level, the context which affected this study is the federal legislation (IDEA), which requires that students receive instruction in the least restrictive environment. In this case, for the students with whom these teachers worked, at least part of their day was spent in their least restrictive environment, the general education classroom.

At a more local level of context, this study occurred within an urban area, where teachers reported that there was little district budget for materials, training, and personnel. Within this context, teachers worked with what they had and recognized that with a limited budget, not all desires would become realities. For instance, teachers faced teaching large class sizes, and because of few instructional assistants, teachers many times did not receive the instructional support they needed in their classes with included special education students.

At the campus level, it must be acknowledged that this study occurred within secondary schools, where students in grades 6-8 or 9-12 were served. The campuses where these teachers worked varied in their support for inclusion, ranging from philosophies that supported inclusive schools, to campus that just recently began to

implement inclusion. Nonetheless, the campuses at which these teachers worked did support inclusive practices to some extent. Finally, one must consider the most local context. For this study, that was the general education classroom. This is worth discussion, because this study did not consider instruction or management while students were in the special education classroom, but in the general education inclusive classrooms.

A visual diagram of the context in which this study took place is included below in Figure 2, to show that numerous levels of context were present, from the most local to national.

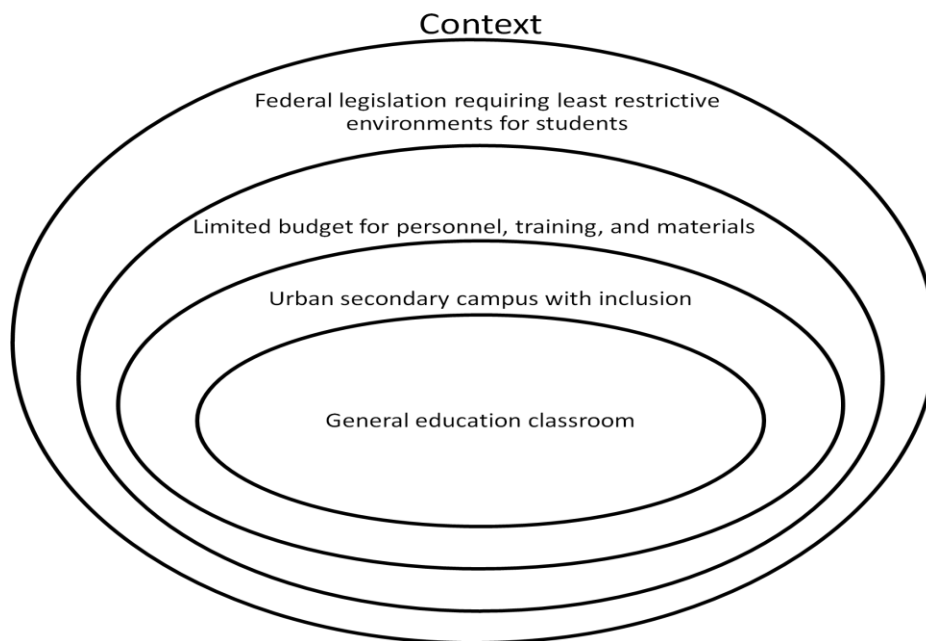


Figure 2. Study context.

Researcher Positionality

Within qualitative research, the primary instrument for both data collection and analysis is the researcher (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Given this critical role of the researcher, an examination “of the researcher’s influence on the research process is important” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 31), and in this spirit, I present a statement on my own experiential and theoretical paradigm as a preamble to my results.

My background is in teaching special education, specifically with students with significant disabilities included in the general education classroom. Over my 10 year teaching career, I have seen, first hand, the success that students can have when appropriate educational services are provided in the least restrictive environment. I have seen students who had previously been in a special education classroom develop social skills, self-confidence, and academic skills at a more rapid rate once they were included in the general education classroom. Thus, I hold the belief that inclusionary practices are positive for most students with disabilities.

After teaching in public schools, I began teaching pre-service teacher preparation courses at the university level. One of the courses focused on preparing teachers for instructing students with significant disabilities, while the other course focused on adaptive and assistive technology. Through both of these courses, I strove to adequately prepare pre-service teachers for serving their future students in inclusive settings.

As a teacher educator, I firmly believe that teacher preparation programs hold an important role in preparing teachers well for their future work in classrooms. I believe it is the responsibility of teacher preparation programs to graduate teachers who are

knowledgeable, competent, and resourceful in addressing the many issues that they will face. Without a question, I believe that teachers must be prepared in classroom management skills, in working with students with disabilities, and in understanding inclusive environments. I feel teacher preparation programs should graduate pre-service teachers with a disposition that is accepting of all students and that seeks to help every student excel and succeed in their skill development.

Theoretically, I hold a worldview which is a combination of pragmatism and constructivism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). I often approach situations in a problem centered approach, where solutions to problems are sought after (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Further, these problem situations are tightly linked to real-world practice. Both problem centeredness and an orientation which focuses on real-world practice are characteristics of the theoretical framework of pragmatism (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Further, pragmatic researchers conduct their studies in ways that are practical and utilize a “what works” approach (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). Pragmatists believe in the value of the “accumulation of collective knowledge” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 3). For this study on learning how expert teachers managed their classes and ultimately learned to manage in those ways, the approach that, given my pragmatic perspective “worked the best” was to interview those teachers to accumulate their collective knowledge.

In addition to my theoretical belief in pragmatism, I also come from a constructivist viewpoint, where knowledge is found from the multiple realities of the participants through closeness with them (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007).

Constructivists believe that knowledge is created or constructed as concepts from the stories which the study participants themselves construct to explain their life experiences (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). Further, constructivism supports inductive methodology, where data begins with the participants' comments and builds up from there into categories and themes (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007). In this study, I was able to begin with the words of the teachers (their constructions) and build up from that data to a higher level of abstraction where concepts or themes were, again, constructed. This process thus was supportive of and supported my constructivist beliefs.

It was from these experiential and theoretical lenses I analyzed the data for this study and through which I sifted the results. I acknowledge that there are other stories or realities that could be present in the data (Corbin & Strauss, 2008). But, I, given my pragmatic stance, believe that the results as I present them best tell the story that I gathered from the data. Too, I believe that the following results provide practical information which can be used to improve teacher preparation programs, which, in turn, supports my worldview of knowledge as constructed and that knowledge should have utility.

Analyzing the Data

I utilized the constant-comparative method of qualitative analysis, whereby data was continuously and simultaneously collected and processed (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Units of data were coded and categorized in terms of concepts (Corbin & Strauss, 2008) in an inductive manner such that a set of categories was developed that corresponded to (Cranton & Carusetta, 2004) each research question. Responses from the participants

that discussed management practices or decisions were categorized as a part of the analysis of question one, whether these responses were given to an interview question that focused on this topic or not. Similarly, participant responses that discussed the ways in which the teachers learned to manage their classrooms were categorized as a part of research question #2. Participant responses were not categorized on the basis of the interview question that was asked, rather by the narrative that the participant provided.

The unitizing process occurred after the transcription of each individual interview had been completed. In briefly reviewing the description of analysis from earlier in this text, transcript data was broken down into units of data that were the smallest portion of information that was interpretable (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). These data units were each printed on individual index cards, such that they were easily maneuvered during the categorization process. This process followed Berg's (2004) suggested procedure of reducing and transforming data such that they will be easier to access and understand. Each teacher interview transcript generated, on average, 346 units of data. Follow-up interview transcripts generated, on average, 56 units of data. Overall, roughly 3300 units of data were unitized, coded, and categorized.

Each data unit (index card) was coded with information that provided an audit trail, through which I could easily locate which teacher made that particular comment. Codes were printed on the cards in the top corner. Again, providing a quick summary of text provided earlier in the analysis portion of this manuscript, coding of data included the data source, type of respondent, site, and episode information (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). A sample of such coding is as follows: HSDHMS5-15-08-03-80. This example

indicates the district name, respondent type, campus level, subject area, date, and teacher number. This coding was utilized in order to maintain confidentiality of those who participated in the study.

Category labels were placed on the index cards with the use of post-it notes. Categories that developed changed over time and with the addition of new data (Weiss & Lloyd, 2002). Categories expanded with additional analysis. For example, an initial category for the research question on management practices was that the students with disabilities “did what everyone else did” (reflexive journal, 12/1/08). This category of “did what everyone else did” changed, such that new dimensions or properties of that category were added as new data was analyzed. This category grew to encompass not only the notion of the students doing what all of the other students did, but also that the students with disabilities were a part of the class, that teasing was not allowed in the class, and that the teachers took actions to avoid stigma of the students with disabilities (Reflexive Journal, 12/29/08). The new title for this category then became “develop an inclusive environment”.

Table 4 displays the categories that existed for both research question #1 and #2 once data collection had been completed and all data were unitized, coded, and final categories had been developed. These categories varied in size, meaning that the number of units of data that made up the categories varied greatly. Some categories were populated with over 150 units of data while other categories included only 10 units; however, most categories represented a range of 40 to 70 units.

Table 4
Categories of Data for Research Questions #1 and #2

Research Question #1: Management Practices and Decisions

Management of Student Learning

Provide alternative assignments/levels	Utilize time management in pacing
Include multi-sensory opportunities	Modify reading materials
Continually renew planning/Be flexible	Simplify vocabulary and definitions
Give clear directions	Re-teach and provide repeated practice
Provide copies of papers	Craft lesson structure and delivery
Include real-world applicability	Set students up for success
Know student characteristics	Awareness and recognition of growth
Allow for creative expression	Modify product expectations
Teach students to question/evaluate	

Management of the Environment

Allow for physical access and space	Work within class make-up/size
Think through student seating	Work as a whole group/class
Consider classroom dynamics	Establish a structure with rules
Develop an inclusive environment	Utilize student grouping
Develop rapport with all students	Monitor students
Create a calm learning environment	

*Table 4 continued*Management of Behavioral Expectations

Hold high expectations	Provide behavioral accommodations
Maintain student focus	Awareness of student stressors
Know student interests and dislikes	Build student self-esteem
Remind/redirect all students	Maintain a respectful attitude and tone
Provide 1:1 support and conversations	Provide student choice/freedom
Appreciate and understand age-group	Be consistent with consequences

*Research Question #2: Learning to Manage Inclusive Classrooms*Traditional Learning

Coursework	Professional development trainings
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Self-directed Learning

Made self aware of disability issues	Actively sought out information
Trial and Error/Experience	Reflecting

Learning from Others

Working relationships	Collaboration
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As can be seen in the table above, the teachers engaged in multiple management strategies, which centered around their students' learning, the learning environment, and the behavioral expectations of the teacher. And, teachers learned to manage in these ways through many different learning opportunities and experiences. Each of these

management categories and means of learning are explained below in the results for research question #1 and #2, respectively.

Inclusive Classroom Management Decisions and Practices

The first research question for this study was “What are the classroom management decisions and classroom management practices of expert general education secondary teachers of student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?” At the onset of this research study, a positivistic hypothesis was not established as my intent was to build theory inductively rather than to test a theory (Orme, 2005). As was the case with most qualitative research methodology, I sought to learn from the participants and to tell the story that came from the research data. The themes that emerged therefore came directly from the data obtained from the participants, and overarching themes developed as the data were categorized and analyzed. As a result, the phenomenon did not immediately present itself, however emerging themes grew and changed as the data was analyzed (Orme, 2005). Initial themes included management categories that seemed to fit within practices (a) due to within classroom factors, (b) due to within teacher factors, and (c) due to external factors (such as state, district, or campus factors) (Reflexive Journal, August, 18, 2008).

As more interview transcripts were unitized, coded, and categorized, these initial themes began to take new form as saturation occurred. Corbin and Strauss (2008) describe saturation as the point when no new data emerges and when development of the categories, including their properties and dimensions have been established. With the data in this study, the point of saturation occurred when the data generated from the

interviews with the teachers became repetitive, thus I was able to anticipate their responses. This occurrence, this no “new” data, as Corbin and Strauss explain it, signaled that the categories were saturated. At that point, I determined that the eight participating teachers in this study had generated enough information to put forth results surrounding the research questions of this study.

Development of the Themes

Corbin & Strauss (2008) describe that it is a common occurrence for qualitative researchers to experience an event in which an insight into the data and into the analysis occurs. The authors described this event as a happening that often occurs when researchers “carry their analytic problems around in their heads as they go about daily activities” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 34). They further explain that through this continual consideration of the data, researchers may gain insight into their data that helps them to “make sense out of data” (Corbin & Strauss, 2008, p. 34).

For me, this type of insight into the data occurred while writing up descriptions of each of the individual management categories and trying to determine the ways in which they fitted together and interacted with one another. I could see that the expert teachers in this study managed their inclusive classrooms in complex ways. They regularly engaged in many different management practices as well as made many different decisions to allow for this effective management on a daily basis.

When working with the 40 categories that came from the data for research question #1, it was conceivable that these data could be arranged into themes in various different ways. These different arrangements of data would then tell different stories.

However, the overarching categories or themes that were selected seemed to fit the 40 preliminary categories best, however, when they were grouped into three areas: a) management of student learning, b) management of the learning environment, and c) management of behavioral expectations. In my analysis, I was able to visualize the various management categories that had already emerged from the data and how these categories told about three distinct, yet connected ways in which teachers managed.

Although the teachers did not verbally label their management in terms of these three themes, I decided that their descriptions of the ways in which they managed their classrooms could be best grouped into these three themes which represented the different categories well. However, it is noted that actions or management decisions that teachers made in one area could certainly impact the other management categories as well. What follows below is a description of the 40 categories of management practices that these teachers used, the management decisions that they made, and how these categories fit together into the three overarching themes.

Theme #1: Management of Student Learning

The expert teachers in this study managed student learning through numerous ways, which can be seen as falling into 17 unique management categories. Each of these categories is described below to demonstrate how the teachers managed student learning.

Providing alternative assignments. Through a practice of having leveled books (i.e., books at different reading grade levels) for students to choose from, Laura, the 6th grade Language Arts teacher, provided her students with alternative levels of the same task. She did this in a discreet way, where students were not necessarily aware that they

received alternative assignments or alternative levels of instruction or practice. Laura described that she had students choose books for silent reading time in her inclusive, co-teach classroom. She explained, “I have books on their level, once they are leveled...they select five books, and they go to their desks.” (T06, 68-69).

This practice of providing alternative assignments or assignments at alternative levels for students with disabilities was a commonly discussed management practice utilized by the expert teachers in this study. Not only was this strategy used within the context of reading, but teachers in different subject areas also used this practice. Vicky, a middle school social studies teacher, explained that activities could sometimes be different for some of her students, while the overall concept remained the same for all students in her class. As she told it, “The curriculum is the same. The objectives are the same. What’s different is often the...activities themselves are different, although the objectives are the same and the...topic is the same” (T04, 90-97).

Include multi-sensory learning opportunities. A second management category for student learning that emerged was that the teachers provided multi-sensory learning opportunities to their students. This management practice was occasionally implemented only for students with disabilities, as was described in the alternative activities above. Tisha, a middle school English teacher, explained that she found herself needing and then utilizing more hands-on materials once she began teaching inclusive classes. She explained about working with her students with disabilities, “I found myself having to do more manipulatives, more things that they could manipulate” (T03, 121). By utilizing

manipulatives, or hands-on activities, Tisha was providing multi-sensory learning opportunities and experiences particularly for her students with disabilities.

More often, however, this practice of using multi-sensory learning opportunities was utilized class-wide in a universally inclusive way. Janice, a visual arts teacher at Lamar High School, described that she provided learning opportunities that met the needs of all of her students in her Art I class, including her students with Down syndrome, autism, intellectual disability, and speech impairments. Janice described,

...when I introduce a lesson I try as many different ways as I can to present it.

So, I focus on their senses, the tactile qualities in the materials...I'm talking about it, but they're also able to read it and see it. And then, we also have samples so they're able to look at it, touch it, feel it (T05, 174-179).

The management practice that Janice described was one in which her lesson was managed so that all students could benefit from multi-sensory learning opportunities.

Continual renewal of planning and flexibility. With the need for varied and flexible means for delivering instruction, as described in the two categories above, it was necessary for teachers to continually renew their planning and be flexible in their planning as well as delivery. Thus, continual renewal of planning and flexibility was an additional category that emerged from the data. Tisha discussed this phenomenon of continual renewal of planning in the following way, "it makes that whole thing when you are a teacher for a while, you could do it in your sleep. But now, you don't get used to any one thing, because you are always having to tailor make it to other people" (T03, 122).

Karen, an 8th grade English teacher at Long Middle School, discussed the practice of being flexible with lesson delivery. She explained several times in her interview that she had to be flexible in her material presentation to the students. Karen explained, "...if something doesn't work, I change it. Even if it's in the middle of an activity" (T02, 122). Janice further explained the need to be flexible. She stated, "I try to be really flexible because sometimes your best idea just flops. So, you have to kind of be ready to pull out something else out of your bag of tricks if that's not working" (T03, 157-158). By being flexible in this way, with both lesson planning and lesson delivery, the teachers in this study were able to provide instruction in both alternative and multi-sensory ways as needed by those students with disabilities included in their classes.

Give clear directions. Another category that developed, which allowed the teachers to manage student learning was to give short, simple, clear directions. It is known that for some students, especially students with a processing disorder or an attention disorder, providing multiple directions simultaneously is not effective. As Vicky, an 8th grade Social Studies teacher explained about her management practice, "...give clear and distinct directions...one direction at a time...you break it down" (T04, 131-133). These clear directions were used to aid students in completing tasks that demonstrated their understanding of the concepts taught.

Modification of reading materials. In order to access secondary curriculum, students needed to be able to read the content area materials. Many of the teachers in this study discussed that reading materials had to be modified to fit the needs of their

students. Tisha, an 8th grade English teacher at Jones Middle School, described how she managed modifying reading materials for her inclusive classes. She stated,

...if we are doing a particular skill and I am using a reading selection that I know is going to be too advanced for them, then (I will be) taking out the time and go find what is comparable for them on their reading level, or what is closer to their reading level, where they still get the same skills (T03, 116).

Through the teachers' actions of modifying the reading materials, the teachers were setting the students up to be able to access the learning at hand. When students were able to access the learning, they were more likely to engage and participate in the learning. By teachers modifying the materials, they were proactively managing the learning in a manner that encouraged student engagement.

Provision of copies of papers. Another category that was well populated by units of data was the seemingly simple management practice of providing copies of needed papers to the students. At the secondary level, note taking is a common activity, and Tisha described her management of this in her inclusive classes. She explained that the class took, "...quite a few notes on whatever I was saying. I also gave it to them in writing" (T03, 176). This was a practice she applied universally throughout her classes. All students were given access to these written notes, not only her students with disabilities. However, the notes that she gave did vary some, depending on the ability level of her students. Tisha explained that for her students "...who didn't need as much help, I gave them skeletons, you know, outlines. And they had to fill in the parts" (T03, 177). However, for her students who struggled with taking accurate notes, she "provided

that (the notes)... I would have a lot of that already done for them. And have shortened versions of the outline and things straight to the point” (T03, 178-179).

In his social studies class, Louis followed a similar procedure of providing copies of papers to his students. In his particular case, Louis worked with a special education co-teacher in his classroom that included students with disabilities. Louis explained that his co-teacher let him know that some of the students needed copies of the notes that he was going to discuss. He discussed how,

I’ll print the notes for the kids...that can’t keep up with the writing...My co-teacher would be like, ‘Hey, would you mind printing off a few copies for these students?’ And I’m like, ‘Sure, yeah, no problem.’ And I’ll print off the copies...And she picks it up and gives it to them. So, all they have to really do is kind of follow along as like I’m just kind of through talking, and they’re writing a few things down (T08, 46-49).

Once again, through the provision of copies of papers, the teachers were setting up their students for success, providing them with access to the learning, while not penalizing them for the challenges that their students might have faced in writing.

Simplify vocabulary and definitions. To manage student learning, some of the teachers discussed the need to provide vocabulary and definitions in a simplified manner to their students with significant intellectual disabilities. Tisha explained that she provided simplified, yet relevant vocabulary for one student with whom she worked who had a significant intellectual disability, “...if I were using some...spelling words, vocabulary words, that I would try to give words ahead that were *S* sound to try to

coincide with what she (the speech teacher) would be doing in her pullout” (T03, 271). In working with some of her other students, Tisha provided notes which were “simplified in vocabulary” (T03, 180). By providing the simplified vocabulary, the teachers were allowing the students access to the concepts and learning, yet at a simpler level.

Develop in-depth knowledge of student characteristics. All of the expert teachers in this study discussed their in-depth knowledge of their students’ characteristics, abilities, and difficulties. By far, this was the most populated management category, consisting of well over 150 units of data. Janice, a high school art teacher, discussed her knowledge of her students frequently throughout her interview. In discussing a group of students who both required special education services and English as a second language (ESL) services from her campus, she explained that she knew an upcoming writing task may pose a challenge for the students. Janice described her efforts to collaborate with other teachers in order to provide these students with comprehensible information. She explained, “I was teaching it (the writing skill) the same way they were taught to learn it (by their language teacher), so it made more sense to them” (T05, 321). Based on her knowledge of her students, Janice was able to take action to manage her class in a way that her students were able to learn.

Other teachers also developed extensive knowledge of their students which aided them in managing their classrooms for the learning of their students. Vicky demonstrated her knowledge of her students through the following description she provided on one of her former students who had a traumatic brain injury (TBI). She explained,

He had a car accident in like early September. We didn't see him back at school until January. And, he had been in Galveston, and with his older brother, and there was a car wreck, and he told the cops and everybody that he was fine and they were waiting for their parents to go down and pick him up, and he passed out. And so he had, he was bleeding, subdural hematoma. And then so they life-flighted him to Herman and operated. And when he came back, he had been a gymnast, when he came back to school, he had a limp...it was all brain damage...he had to use a calculator for math 'cause he couldn't remember any of his math facts. And,...I would say his general intellectual capacity was diminished...his personality had changed. He was much shyer, more withdrawn... Of course, he was a popular student, before the car accident. Which turned into, you know, fewer problems. But yeah, his classmates were happy to see him and he just kinda, we just brought him on in. And we met with the...special ed people, the testing department before he came to class, because they wanted to fill us in on his deficits that had occurred, and so that we knew, for instance, that the math teacher knew he's gotta have a calculator, he can't remember anything. And his handwriting has suffered. And so, limit what you ask him to write by hand (T04, 253-278).

This type of knowledge of the students was not unique to Vicky and Janice, but rather each of the teachers provided in-depth descriptions of some of their students' background, characteristics, needs, abilities, weaknesses, and strengths.

Re-teach and provide repeated practice. The teachers' frequently cited the use of re-teaching and providing repeated practice opportunities for their students. By providing these extra experiences with the material, the teachers were managing their classrooms in a way to enhance student learning. The teachers assisted students with comprehension of the material in a number of ways. Laura explained that, "...a lot of times I double up on my examples...they get a little extra, with just some supplemental activities" (T06, 132, 137). Tisha's special education teaching peer explained that Tisha would, "repeat or back up on what they were working on" when needed (S03, 18). The special education teacher further explained that although Tisha taught 8th grade teacher, she reviewed prerequisite skills that students should have learned in 6th grade when she noticed that they did not have the needed skills. He explained that Tisha, "did some drill and practice of lower level prerequisite skills. For example, independent and dependent clauses. (She) had to review conjunctions from sixth grade" (S03, 8-9).

In some cases, repeated practice or re-teach opportunities were provided after school through tutoring. Laura described that in providing after school tutoring she was able to provide additional modifications and support to her students with disabilities without singling them out. She tutored students with disabilities who were included with other general education students after school, yet she still worked one-on-one with the special education students. She focused some of her after school tutoring based on the results students had received on standardized tests (FUT06, 32-36).

Carefully craft lesson structure and delivery. The teachers in this study frequently spoke about the ways in which they structured their lessons and their lesson

delivery, primarily to aid students in comprehending the material or content. Teachers used a number of different practices during a given lesson which typically followed the lesson cycle. Teachers motivated their students through the lesson introduction which connected the day's learning to prior learning. Ways in which teachers did this varied, but included having students journal at the beginning of the period and discuss the day's agenda. Tisha explained a strategy she used to motivate her student in the lesson.

What I normally do is put on a little show at the beginning. And what I mean by that is I play a different...like there is an imaginary guy in the classroom named Peter. And so, Peter is always doing something. And whatever I'd have him doing for the day, my lesson was going to tie into him. And so, even though he didn't exist, they all bought into it. And he was like this imaginary guy that I could always say, 'Now what do you think Peter would say in a situation like this?' You know, and they would tell me. And I would say, 'Somebody go write a compound sentence on the board. Peter likes this, and Peter likes this. Well, write a sentence that Peter likes.' And they would get up and do it. It's just a think I have done to tie in all of my lessons to Peter. And, it works (T03, 168-171).

By using many different parts of a typically lesson cycle, teachers avoided engaging their students in one type of activity for a long period of time, where they might become disinterested. Rather, they mixed things up and kept students interested and engaged so that students could better understand the material. Laura explained a part of her lesson structure which took place during closure and which specifically assisted

with content comprehension. She stated, “They do a reflection card each day. And the purpose of that is...for me to figure out did they learn the concept that was taught that day” (T06, 176).

Allow for creative expression. Several of the teachers noted frequently providing opportunities for creative expression. This was done most often through working with the materials and creating art projects. Janice explained that in working with some of her high school students with significant intellectual disabilities who,

are much lower level...you still want them to have some art experiences. But, there’s ways to do it where they can actually get into the work. You know, whether it’s handprints, or uh, you know, sponge painting, where they are actually physically doing it...and it is a lot of work to present the materials and have everything out. But, the *experience for the kids* is so valuable (T05, 220-223).

Janice’s special education department head commented that, in part, what made Janice effective at including students with significant disabilities in the classroom was that she, “Allows opportunity for expressive release” (SH05, 01). By incorporating experiences for creative expression, these teachers purposefully created a means by which some of their students with the most significant intellectual disabilities could participate in the lesson.

Set students up for success. In addition, the teachers in this study mentioned numerous times ways in which they set their students up for success and that they wanted success for all of their students. Tim discussed that he modified work on an art

vocabulary test in a way that brought out the strongest abilities for a certain child, while still challenging him in an area of needed growth. He explained, "...I picked the three that I knew that he knew and then I'd put one in that he had difficulty with..." (T01, 152).

As a part of setting their students up for success, many teachers established and allowed for a tolerance for error for the students. Laura explained the way that this worked in her classroom; "But to see them...even once they make a mistake, to know that they're not going to be penalized for it" (T06, 206). She provided this statement to show that students felt more confidence and freer to do their work to the best of their ability, knowing that not every mistake was penalized. Typically, when students feel more confident in their abilities, fewer behavioral problems are exhibited. By setting students up for success, these teachers utilized a proactive management strategy to encourage student engagement and involvement in the learning.

Modify product expectations. The teachers mentioned modifying tests for their students, modifying the work products that students completed, as well as modifying the amount of work that a student were required to do or were graded upon. Vicky explained that she modified an assignment for a particular student in a way that brought out the best in him, yet still was a challenge for him. She stated,

...(in talking to a student) instead of doing three examples here, I want one. And three examples here, I want one. And then go ahead, in this area which was the one that was more personal. Go ahead and give me three, you know, three parts here (T04, 103-105).

In this example, Vicky modified the work for her student based on the concepts that she wanted him to focus upon. He still demonstrated his knowledge in different areas, yet she required him to spend more time working on portions of the assignment that were most relevant to his life. This type of modification was individualized based on the ability and needs of each particular student.

In modifying for some of her students with disabilities, Karen discussed the modifications she provided through her grading. Students received the same work, so as to avoid stigma or embarrassment in the classroom with peers. However, when she picked up students' work, her grading took into account the ability level of the individual student. Karen explained,

There were modifications made, but there was not any kind of different assignments given. 'Cause I don't want them to feel like, because that, to me that's a self esteem issue that, ya know, oh he's doing this work and I have to do something that has pictures on it. Uh, because they do recognize that and I don't think that that's fair to do that to the kid...and even when modifications were made, the modifications were not made until I got the paper back. I didn't even put it on the paper because I didn't want any of the other students to see that, oh, how come he only has to do four problems and I have to do all ten? Or, how come he only has to write half a page, and I have to write three? Ya know, I didn't want any of that to happen (T02, 73-77).

Similar forms of this type of modifying grading were used by other teachers in this study, where the emphasis was to assess the student's learning without stigmatizing the student with a disability. As Vicky put it,

your assessment, your evaluation is again based on what you've asked them to do in particular. Part of that, in middle school, is to be real...quiet about when you're modifying for them. You know, when they're in the classroom with other students, you want to make that as nearly invisible as you can (T04, 108-110).

Through modifying the product expectations, teachers were able to manage their students' learning in ways that proactively promoted successful inclusion of the students with a disability, yet without stigmatization.

Teach students how to question and be evaluative. Aiding in the development of higher level thinking and executive functioning, the teachers discussed ways in which they taught their students how to question, be evaluative, and be resourceful. Laura explained the need for teaching students how to question in her classroom when she said, "I have to teach them how to question, so they do that a little bit better at the end of the semester than they would have at the beginning...again, I have to teach them how to do that" (T06, 141&150).

Laura further explained ways in which she worked with her students on being resourceful, "if they can figure out where to find the information, that's part of the battle if they know where to go back and find the information. Again, I have to teach them how to do that because initially they are sitting there, with the paper with the answer, big bold print and they are just kind of dumbfounded" (T06, 149-150). Laura later re-emphasized

this need for students to learn to be resourceful. She explained that students may not have learned all of the particular content, but they had learned where to go to find the information (T06, 342).

Janice described her practice of having her students do art critiques. Within the art critiques, she asked the students to review the work of other students and give them their opinions. In utilizing art critiques, Janice taught her students to be evaluative of both their own work and that of others. She explained,

We'll talk about what the assignment was and the grading rubric. We'll talk about the strengths in the work, what were the things that are working, that are really successful. And then I'll ask a kid to choose one work of art to talk about what they like about it and then one work of art what they think could be done to improve the work...And so, for the person who's drawing it sometimes it's great to get that outside view (T05, 250-259).

By teaching the students to be evaluative and resourceful, teachers were engaging in a proactive rather than reactive management strategy. If their students learned to look for materials on their own or evaluate their own work, less teacher time was then spent on re-directing students or assisting students when they were capable of working independently.

Include real-world applicability. Including real-world applicability in the lessons was another management practice discussed by several teachers. By making the lessons have real-world applicability, the teachers were able to increase interest and relevance in the lessons for their students. Kyle described his work with his high school students in

his culinary arts class. He stated, "...I pull the life skills parts out for my special needs students, and emphasize the life skills part that they...would need to know in order to do things, certain things in their kitchen" (T07, 61-62). In a follow-up interview with Kyle, he discussed that his lessons have real-world applicability once again. He explained that students were being prepared for a job in the food industry and for cooking in their own homes. He discussed that, "these would be activities that they might need to do independently in the future" (FUT07, 9).

Similarly, Janice discussed that she provided students with opportunities to verbalize about their art work. She explained, "it's very important because they often don't know...what to say about work. So, this is their chance to learn how to verbalize about work" (T05, 261). She explained that whether the students were going to become future artists or not, giving them the opportunity to talk about their work and the work of others gave them positive opportunities to practice verbalizing about work, which could be useful in a number of different jobs (T07, 262-266).

Utilize time management in pacing. The teachers utilized time management in pacing in order to effectively manage student learning in their classrooms. Time management and pacing revolved around knowing the limits of the students and the age group, and then working within those realities. The special education teacher who most closely worked with Tisha described Tisha's pacing practices when stating that she, "Modifies pacing based on student comprehension of material" (S03, 19). Tisha's lesson pacing slowed down when students struggled with the material. Conversely, when she

could tell students were catching on to the concepts quickly, her lesson pacing speeded up.

Teachers discussed knowing the length of typical activities, given their years of teaching experience. Several teachers also mentioned that they developed an understanding of ways to adapt a particular lesson's pacing for their upcoming classes after teaching their first class of the day. Many times, teachers slowed down their lessons in order to give extra time for practice, repetition, and comprehension. However, the teachers did not have unengaged time. The lesson content delivery went more slowly, but without unengaged time. Laura explained, "I think one of the key things, and this is what I've shared with my colleagues too, is I don't have lulls. I don't have...downtime" (T06, 64). Teachers also included time estimates for different activities within their lesson plans. To keep themselves and the students to the time-limits needed, teachers used time management strategies, such as using buzzers, bells, stopwatches, and writing the time on the blackboard.

Finally, several teachers mentioned the need to change up activities to assist with maintaining student attention and focus during the lesson. Karen explained, "changing activities helps with management, 'cause if the kids have to sit and do the same thing for more than twenty minutes... they're gonna start doing something else. And, it's usually something you don't want 'em to" (T02, 157). Similar to Karen's description of keeping students engaged by changing up activities, Louis explained the way that this worked in his classroom,

I normally have a stop watch and I go about...every fifteen minutes we'll do something, right. And it's basically the form of... okay, you're twelve, thirteen years old, cause you have the attention span of a twelve or thirteen year old, which means you're going to last for about fifteen minutes. So every fifteen minutes, and I have a stop watch, and I carry it right here on my belt, and I start it. Every fifteen minutes we are going to vary up instruction (T08, 35-38).

Like Louis and Karen, teachers discussed that they went through different activities each class period. Each activity lasted between 15-30 minutes on average, in order to keep students interested and engaged in the lesson.

Awareness and recognition of student growth. Another way in which teachers managed student learning to provide options for sustaining effort and persistence was by first noticing their students' potential, growth and gains in the content. To assist teachers in their ability to notice these gains that their students made, they regularly assessed their students' progress. Assessments were both formal and informal, including the state-wide assessment, pre and post tests, teacher observations, and students' daily work. After noticing gains, teachers made a point to acknowledge the success of their students. This was done by hanging work on the bulletin board, verbally praising a student in class, or through private conversation with the student.

The teachers were quite eager to share with me that their students had made progress in written skills, reading ability, participation in class, artistic abilities, and social skills. Laura explained about one student who she had taught the previous year came back to share her state assessment results with her, and although the student was

disappointed, Laura was quite pleased. Laura explained, “when I saw her scores she was maybe one question off, which having taken the SDAA last year, she doesn’t understand that that’s a giant leap” (T06, 315). Similarly, Tisha acknowledged the success of her students who took assessments which differed than the assessments taken by her general education students. She explained, “and even the ones who took...the modified...TAKS-M or TAKS-A...we know they got more questions right than wrong” (T03, 321).

Thus, teachers noticed growth in their individual student’s abilities, rather than comparing their achievements to the class as a whole. By recognizing the successes of their students, teachers felt encouraged in that the work they invested in their students paid dividends. Teachers praised their students, which likely built up their confidence in the subject area.

Figure 3 was created to display the 17 unique, yet interrelated categories that all feed in together to the over-arching theme of management of student learning. This diagram was not created as a conceptual model, but rather as a succinct visual display which serves as a reference for the practices of these teachers in relation to management of student learning.

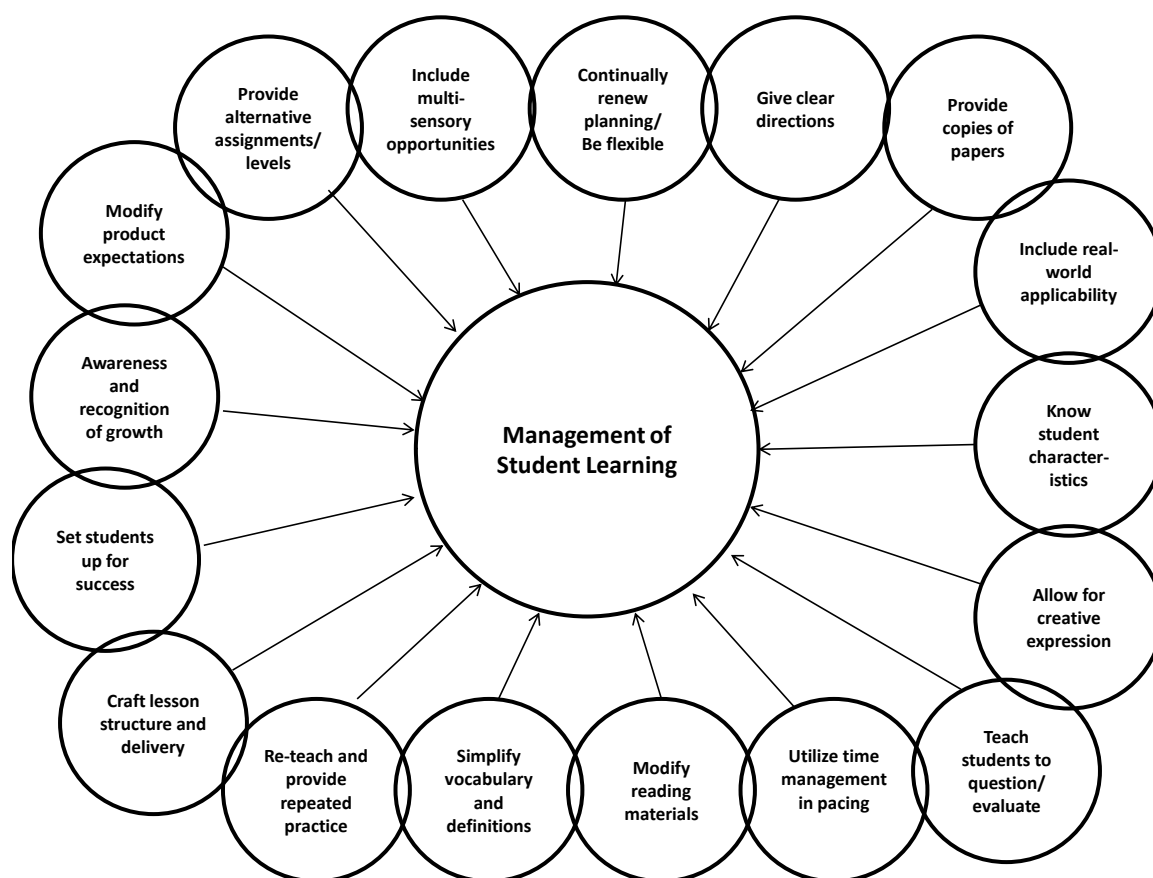


Figure 3. Management of student learning.

Theme #2: Management of the Environment

The second of the three over-arching themes which described the ways in which these expert teachers managed their classrooms was management of the environment. The 11 specific, yet related categories of classroom management practices which emerged from the data and fit into this over-arching theme are described below.

Allow for physical access and space. In managing their classroom environments, one of the practices that teachers discussed was allowing for physical access and space.

Some of the teachers found that to accommodate for learner differences, they had to make adjustments in seating or room layout. In managing the environment in this way, the teachers thus provided the student with a significant cognitive disability access to the classroom and space needed for effective learning. Vicky explained that this type of management was needed and accomplished for two different students in her classroom. She said,

when he was nervous, he would do serious, ya know, twitching or...And it was like he didn't, he didn't socialize well with the other students. And so, it was just better for him to have his space...he had some little rigid kinds of things to do, and he had space to spread out and do it... I had another kid, several years ago, that he was one of the kinds of kids that had to rock or he had to stand up and rock...he needed to be in the back row so that he could stand up and rock (T04, 22-24, 53, 60, & 62).

In both of these cases Vicky recognized that the students engaged in behaviors that could be disturbing to other students but that were uncontrollable for these particular students. She did not punish students for these behaviors; rather, she allowed space for them to exhibit these behaviors when needed without causing a problem in the classroom. She gave the students the space he needed to be successful in the classroom.

Think through student seating. In addition to managing physical access and space, student seating was an additional management category that the expert teachers frequently mentioned. Teachers carefully thought through the seating arrangements of their students in order to set up an environment where students could be successful.

Karen explained that in her inclusive classrooms her students with autism “...always sat near me. Just for communication purposes, comfort level...and...the rest of the students do change seats every six weeks...my autistic students never did” (T02, 12-13).

Laura described that she reflected on the impact seating had on one particular student’s lack of success on academic tasks. She described that although preferential seating was not part of his modifications in his IEP, she noted that she needed to make an adjustment for him. She mentioned that she, “moved him more because he just seemed to have trouble staying focused...I moved him...over on this side of the room, and I saw him respond more in class” (T06, 254-256).

Tisha explained that a particular seat at the front of the room, which was a part of a group of seats turned in together, was the “ideal seat” for some of her students with more significant disabilities and behavioral challenges. She found this ideal seating place to be, “right in front of the board and right in front of the room,” where she could see her student and his/her table group (T04, 34-36). Thus, the decisions teachers made about student seating addressed individual student needs as well as ease in teacher monitoring. Teachers also made decisions about placement of students with disabilities either with other students or independent from other students.

Work within the reality of class make-up and size. The teachers often mentioned that smaller class size was best for implementing inclusion, but also acknowledged that this ideal was not always possible given the realities of their campus and district. The expert teachers mentioned many times that they worked within those realities to allow for successful inclusion. Tim explained that he used his multiple grade level classes as a

form of instructional support for students with disabilities; "...I think what probably helps me with a child with special needs is that I have all three grade levels in my class" (T01, 245). With this arrangement, Tim was then able to have older students, who had taken art with him in the previous year, assist the younger students who needed additional support.

Teachers also discussed that some of their classes contained only one student with a disability, while others included as many as eight students with disabilities. Karen explained that in a class with many students with disabilities, "it made it easier and more difficult because you're dealing with so many different issues at one time with the borderline MR and the autism, and just learning disabilities" (T02, 63). Karen explained that including a number of students with disabilities in one class period was easier as a co-teacher was then able to provide support within the classroom. However, she also stated that it was difficult to have numerous students with disabilities in the classroom during one period because of the many different needs and supports of these students.

For these teachers, working within the realities of class size and composition required effective management. When working with large classes, which included several students with disabilities and little adult support, teachers relied on their other students to provide assistance. When working with large classes with many included students with disabilities, the teachers typically utilized the support of another adult (either a co-teacher or a teaching assistant) to make the learning environment as successful as possible.

Janice explained the need for smaller class sizes and adult special educator support. She stated,

So, I think...when you do inclusion you should decrease the class size first of all. It makes it easier on them (students with disabilities) and makes it easier for the teacher to be successful. So, I think whenever you include these kids, like maybe instead of having 30 you should have 15 plus your life skills. And then an aid should always be with them...I think that, um, it would be really great smaller class when we included the life skills kids. That way they'd have more opportunity to have one on one, and my other kids wouldn't feel short-cuttled (T05, 362-372).

Smaller class sizes with few students with disabilities in each class was what teachers seemed to prefer and to find to be more effective, although they acknowledged that this scenario was not always a possibility.

Establish a structured environment with rules. The teachers established a structured environment that was well-prepared and had rules and procedures in place. The classroom environment was often described by teachers as firm and structured. The structured environments that these teachers established were evident to other individuals on the campus as well. The special education teacher who most closely worked with Tim described his classroom environment as, "relaxed but structured" (S01, 11). Similarly, Tim described himself as, "both relaxed and firm at the same time" (T01, 189). In reflecting on her classroom management practices, Karen stated,

Everybody says the kids need structure, and I totally agree with that. They need structure and that's one of the things that I offer to everybody is my class is so structured the kids are probably made of bricks by now...I mean we do the same, it's the same routine every single day. Nothing varies. Just the activities vary, but not the schedule (T02, 120-121).

In a follow-up interview, Laura explained that what she believed made her effective was that she liked structure and that she believed in discipline. Laura stated part of the structured environment she provided was that, "They know my expectation level, my rules and procedures" (FUT06, 7-8).

Each of the teachers in this study had developed and implemented procedures in their classrooms that helped to develop a structured environment for their students. Tisha explained her procedure for when students arrived to class; "...part of my classroom procedure is that as soon as you enter the room, you copy your agenda from the board, and if there is a journal, you get the journal and start journaling for that day" (T03, 8).

Similarly, Karen described her procedure for students who finished their work early,

And the kids who finish early, they read. And that's just...part of the procedure. If you finish with your work, then 'cause they all have book reports they have to do. So, they always have books checked out, and they just read, and they work on, they have a reading log that's due...every Monday. And, they work on that (T02, 153).

Teachers attributed their successful classroom management, in part, to their structured classroom environments that incorporated well thought-out and consistently implemented rules and procedures.

Create a calm learning environment. Also within the overarching category of management of the environment, was another category which was an extension of the structured environments described in the section above: Teachers established environments that were conducive to learning. The instructional environment they described was calm, with few real behavior problems. Although their classrooms contained students with behavioral challenges, the teachers did not view the students' particular behavioral difficulties as "behavioral problems" in their class. Tisha explained, "He is not a behavior problem in any sense. His behavior is just a little different. It's not...distracting" (T03, 67-68). Similar to Tisha's description, Laura spoke of a student saying, "He was never a behavior problem" and "I don't really have a behavior problem...in my class" (T06, 217 and 60). Even with individual students with disabilities who demonstrated behavioral peculiarities, these teachers maintained a learning environment in which these behaviors were not problematic.

The teachers additionally commented that a learning environment could be humorous, fun, and interesting as well. Several teachers said they used music and humor in their classrooms as a strategy to create a welcoming and calm learning environment. Tim explained that "having a sense of humor" "works well" with his middle school students (T01, 281). Tim, Karen, and Janice all mentioned using music in their

classrooms when students were working in order to help keep student voices low and the environment a comfortable and pleasant one.

To these teachers, a fun atmosphere was not necessarily one of chaos. In describing the importance of her classroom learning environment, Laura explained, “I don’t want anything to interrupt the learning process...they (students) know what to expect when they come in...it’s not a chaotic classroom...it’s very calm” (T06, 52, 76, 34, 36). Laura explained that her students told her they really liked her class. When she asked the students what they liked about her class, students consistently explained that they liked it because the class was calm (T06, 33-34).

Develop an inclusive environment. One of the largest management practice categories revolved around making the environment an inclusive one. The teachers created an inclusive environment in several ways. They ensured that all students were able to participate in all classroom activities. They held high expectations for all of their students, both academically and behaviorally. By holding high academic expectations, all students participated. Students with disabilities were expected to participate and do their very best. With this expectation implemented for all students, students with disabilities were able to fit in with the class more easily.

Additionally, the teachers held high behavioral expectations for all students, where no teasing or bullying behaviors were allowed. By not allowing these behaviors to take place, the environment was accepting of all individuals, and no students were stigmatized for having a disability. Teachers believed they were being proactive in avoiding instances where students would make fun of others for having work that was

obviously different. By doing this, the teachers made sure that all students felt as if they were a part of their inclusive classroom. For example, Tim described his decision to have a student with autism do what all other students in the class were doing, “I decided from the beginning that I would have him...do every, all the projects they were asked to do,” (T01, 3).

In a follow-up interview, Kyle described the necessary purposeful acts of making the classroom environment an inclusive one. He explained, “I would suggest that anyone who will be educating both general education and special education students, you want to treat the inclusion student the same. The modifications should be seamless. The student with the disability shouldn’t even feel the modifications. That’s why I give more responsibility to my students with disabilities now. It should be a seamless thing between the general education students and the students with disabilities” (FUT07, 18-21).

Work as a whole group/class. Teachers also discussed the practice of working as a whole class to build interest in the lesson and activity. This was done through a variety of ways, including whole group guided practice, holding class discussions, through guided learning, or other means where all students were focused together as a whole class on understanding and becoming interested in the topic or concept. Teachers usually described that they did work together as a class and then went over examples with the class as a whole (T06, 136 & 145).

As a part of working as a whole group, the teachers developed management strategies to allow for voluntary participation of the students as well as strategic ways to

call on students with disabilities, such that they were successful in contributing to the whole group. Vicky explained that her system ensured that all students, including her students with disabilities, had a chance to participate during whole group time. She said,

I have a system of calling on students. I have a system of index cards that I randomly shuffle that's got their names on it and so sometimes for those kids (with disabilities) you cheat in terms of when you call their name. You give them the easier question. You know, if they raise their hand and want to participate in a discussion, you call on them. Give 'em a chance (T04, 169-172).

By providing whole group support, the needs of the entire class, not only the needs of the student with the disability, but the needs of other students were met as well. And, by developing and utilizing strategic means to allow student participation during whole group time, students who were not as verbose or not as eager to share their knowledge were able to participate.

Utilize student grouping. Another management practice was to utilize student groupings, such as group work or pairing / partnering students for an assignment. Many teachers discussed the careful consideration that needed to go into wisely creating their student groups. Janice explained, "I like to pair them (students with a disability) up with a real compassionate kid who's usually a higher level of maturity than the average kid their age, so that they can handle that extra responsibility" (T05, 117). Laura also explained her use of peer support for her students. She described how she matched a student with a disability up with a gifted and talented (GT) student of the same gender and sent them to the library. She made sure both students agreed to work together and

had the special education co-teacher go to the library periodically to check on the pair. Laura explained that the benefits of using peer tutoring was, “building trust between students. Students with disabilities felt comfortable asking questions of GT students without being in front of class. The purpose also was for student to master the concept in a smaller group, outside of the classroom” (T06, 22-29).

Teachers also discussed the need to place students in groups to provide assistance to the students who needed extra help. Karen described that she did this in her classroom,

like a grammar review, if I knew we were reviewing a grammar lesson that was a little higher level, I would make it a group assignment even though education wise it may not have been a group assignment...what, ya know, administration would consider a group activity, just because, and that was something I just had to learn that I just could not do it all by myself. Ya know, I needed the kids (T02, 94-96).

The purposes of using student grouping were many; to provide content support to the students who were struggling, to develop peer relationships, and to provide additional support to the teacher in reaching the many needs in the classroom. With these different purposes for grouping, one larger overarching purpose remained-- to successfully meet the needs of the students in the inclusive classroom environment.

Consider classroom dynamics. When considering group dynamics, the teachers showed an in-depth awareness of the students’ peer relationships within their classroom. The teachers noticed the particular socialization needs for their different students and

allowed for student socialization and conversation when these activities did not take away from the learning task at hand. Janice explained that some of her students with significant cognitive disabilities, "...really focus on their peers and look to their peers for reinforcement" (T05, 138). Janice also explained that peers assisted a student who was beginning to act out. She said, "if she's acting up...they'll sit down and they'll talk to her. 'It's time to be quiet; you need to do this'" (T05, 188). Other teachers also allowed for their students to receive this type of reinforcement and feedback from their peers.

Managing inclusive classrooms required teachers to reflect on the classroom dynamics, especially concerning the impact of the student with a disability on the whole class. Many times teachers held a conversation with their class about the included student with a disability while that student was not in the room. These conversations were held to explain dynamics and establish expected behaviors to the other students. Tim explained one of these types of discussions with his class and then with individual students. He said,

I told the class...I want you to understand something. Justin (student pseudonym) is special...but, treat him with respect. And, I said, you understand what I'm saying? And, they all said, 'Oh yeah, oh yeah.' And, what I had to explain to the students that were next to him was you need to be focused and don't let him get you off focus (T01, 67-68, 110).

Similar to this management technique, Karen held a conversation with her class, "just so there wouldn't be any awkwardness" and to let the students know that "I hold a very

high level of respect with y'all and I know that you know that I expect it from you as well, and so there's not gonna be any talk, at all, that would be considered disrespectful" (T02, 21, 24). She later explained to me that she held these conversations to explain her expectations in regards to interacting with the student with the disability, such that no name calling or bullying type activity occurred (T02, 139). This type of management practice was common across the teachers in this study. Teachers worked to prevent problems from arising by considering the dynamics of their classroom as well as the dynamic contribution of the student with a disability.

Monitor students. One of the management practices that all of the teachers mentioned was that of monitoring their students. Monitoring occurred at all points of the class day while teachers walked around the classroom to see how their students were doing and what they were doing. When asked about her preventive management strategies, Tisha explained that she was, "very into what's going on, and...really can use my peripheral vision to see things that would just blow their minds" (T03, 193). Tisha explained that she, "...always gave them (her students) a time to work on something in class, so that I can kind of see how they are doing by monitoring" (T03, 184). Laura described her monitoring of her students with disabilities as well, "I am cognizant of them, more cognizant of them, and pay attention to the things that they do...and stay in tune with them and observe and watch" (T06, 95, 222).

Additionally, teachers monitored their students' expressions during instruction. Tisha explained that she used monitoring by looking "for visual signs of whether or not I think she (a student with a disability) is getting whatever it is I am saying" (T03, 7).

Similarly, Karen described that she monitored and read her students' faces to determine if they understood what she was teaching (T02, 106). By monitoring the students, the teachers were able to keep the students focused or provide feedback, reminders, or redirections, if needed.

Develop rapport with all students. All of the teachers discussed the importance of developing a good rapport with all of their students. Kyle discussed that he believed he had developed a positive rapport with this students. He believed that by doing so, students were more open in discussing problems, issues, or concerns with him (T07, 206-208). Not only did the teachers themselves mention this, but the rapport was evident to others on the campus as well. The special education teachers with whom the expert teachers worked also discussed the rapport that they noticed between these teachers and their students. Tim's special education peer and department head explained that what made Tim effective was, "The bond he creates with his student...the relationship" (S01, 03). Similarly, Louis's special education department commented that he developed a positive, "relationship with the students" (SH08, 03).

Figure 4 provides a visual display of the categories that fit within the overarching theme of management of the environment. This diagram was not created as a conceptual model, but rather as a succinct visual display which serves as a reference for this section of management practices.

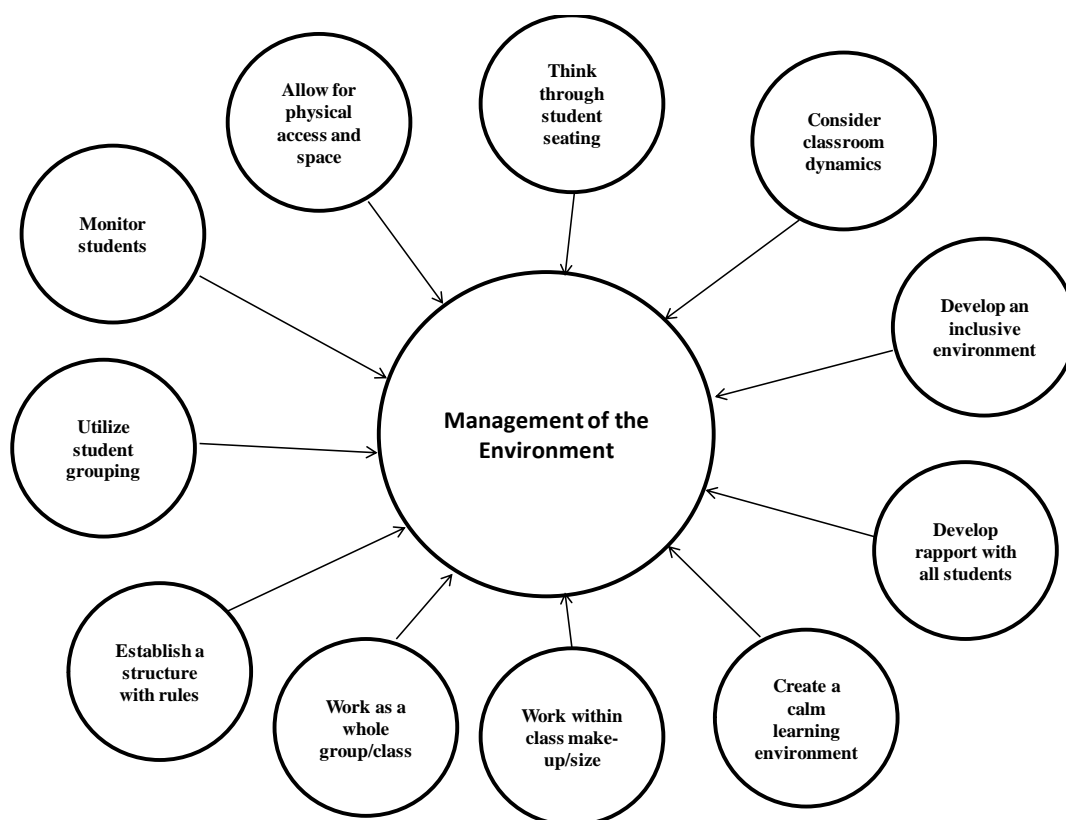


Figure 4. Management of the environment.

Theme #3: Management of Behavioral Expectations

The third overarching theme for how these expert teachers managed their inclusive classrooms was management of behavioral expectations. As part of this theme, 12 distinct, yet related categories emerged from the data. Each of these classroom management categories is described below.

Hold high expectations. Expert teachers in this study frequently mentioned that they held high expectations for their students. Part of holding high behavioral expectations was to avoid classroom disruptions. Vicky explained her expectations for her students, “In terms of behavior, you expect them (students with significant cognitive

disabilities) to...learn to hold their behavior to a standard that it's not disrupting the class" (T04, 148). Laura explained that holding high expectations resulted in positive outcomes for the students in her classroom. She stated, "...the children, regardless, they rise to your expectations...They may not hit the mark, but they rise to the expectations...so they know they have to learn how to function with, within whatever capacity that they have and beyond" (T06, 106-107&476). By holding high expectations, the teachers developed an environment such that they were able to frequently report that they did not have major behavior problems in their classroom.

Maintain a respectful attitude and tone. Many of the teachers commented that they managed their classrooms with a respectful attitude and tone. In doing this, they noted that they were a role model for the students as to the ways in which individuals should treat others, including students with disabilities. In a follow-up interview, Laura described the importance of her own attitude in her classroom, "I don't play with them, but we have fun...I speak to them in a firm but respectful manner. I don't make snide remarks. I set boundaries that I don't cross. They respect the boundaries. I act as an adult" (FUT06, 12-18). Laura further explained that through her actions, she modeled for her students, "when things should be taken seriously, when we can have fun, when I need their attention" (FUT06, 05).

Similarly, Louis discussed many practices that he incorporated into his classroom which contributed to a respectful environment. He discussed that when students spoke to him, he looked them in the eye and address them as "Mister, Miss, Sir, or Ma'am." He explained that by giving the students respect, this respect was often reciprocated. He said

a teacher should, “act like a professional, treat the kids with respect man. Ninety percent of the times you’re going to get respect back” (T08, 271-272). He further explained that by keeping the classroom a safe environment where no one was allowed to speak badly about anyone else, he created a respectful environment. This included his own speaking, where he spoke respectfully to the students and did not belittle anyone. He discussed that this was helpful, “Because bottom line is if you could just talk to people with respect, most of the times, you won’t have any problems with them” (T08, 172).

Appreciate and understand age-group. In addition to being respectful toward their students, these teachers had developed an appreciation and understanding for the age group that they taught. Tim spoke about his understanding of the emotional development of students at the middle school level. He explained,

I like middle school kids, you know. They can hate you one day, absolutely hate you one day, think you’re the worse person on the planet, and the next day it’s, especially 6th and 7th graders, they forgive you really fast. Eight graders, sometimes, it takes a little longer, to wear them down (T01, 272-274).

In addition to understanding their emotional development, Laura discussed her understanding that “children are going to be children” (T06, 43), and that there would be occasional disruptions (T06, 50). However, she used this understanding as a catalyst for maintaining a structured environment, which the teachers believed their students appreciated (T04, 147). Even though Laura knew that students at the middle school age level tried to avoid work tasks, by maintaining a structured environment she was able to keep the students involved and reduce disruptions.

Not only did these teachers understand their students, they also enjoyed the age group. The teachers frequently cited this understanding and “liking” of the age group as a reason for successful inclusive classroom management. When asked how he learned to manage an inclusive classroom, Tim’s first reaction was, “I like kids. I love middle school. People always say, ‘You teach middle school? Oh bless you.’ But, I really like middle school” (T01, 236-238). By liking their students, liking the age group that they taught, the teachers were able to more effectively manage their classrooms.

Know student interests and dislikes. Beyond an understanding of the age group, the teachers very often commented on their understanding of individual students. The teachers had developed knowledge of their students’ interests and dislikes, and were able to recognize the gifts or talents that their students possessed. Teachers used their knowledge of their student interests to make lessons interesting to them and to encourage students to build on what they know. For example, Janice explained, “Our kids come to us with different levels of experience. What we try to look at are their interests. I take what they’re interested in and get them to expand that” (FUT05, 15-17). Janice described that one of her students with Down syndrome had a strong interest in Spiderman. She allowed him to do a particular project with Spiderman as the subject, but she pushed him by asking him to give the picture movement. With this deep knowledge of the student’s interests and dislikes, the teachers were also able to manage their classes in a way which allowed for them to provide choices for their students that were well suited to their interests and which were motivational for the students.

Provide student choice/freedom. Teachers provided students with choices and freedoms when they deemed they were appropriate. This provision of choices was either implemented for the entire class or for individual student. Teachers discussed providing students with choices in seating, movement in the classroom, mode of participation, and material selection. Tim explained that in his middle school art classes, “they can sit next to whoever they want. It’s fine with me, as long as they work” (T01, 185). In this same class, Tim allowed students to

get up and move around” as they needed to, “as long as it’s to get something that pertains to what they are doing, an eraser, a book...as long as they’re doing something that pertains to what they are supposed to be doing in class (T01, 183-184).

By allowing their students at the secondary level choice, they allowed them to feel comfortable in their environment and as if they had some control over their own learning.

When discussing her students’ participation in class, Tisha explained that she allowed her students with disabilities to choose the way in which they participated. For example, she stated, “I would let them read (orally) when they wanted to. I never forced anybody to do anything they didn’t want to” (T03, 190-191). Similarly, when discussing a student with social difficulties, Tisha explained that during group assignments the student was allowed to choose if he wanted to work with a group or not. She said, “he may decide he wants to work with the group...I never forced it on him” (T03, 253-254). The choices that these teachers allowed for their students were ones that did not disrupt

the learning environment. Rather, they allowed students to participate in ways in which they felt confident and comfortable.

Provide one-on-one support and conversations. An often mentioned management practice utilized by these expert teachers was to provide individualized support to their students. This was done through one-on-one conversations and one-on-one instructional support. This type of one-on-one interaction was done with all students in the class, not only the students with a disability. Tim explained that his knowledge of the student impacted the way in which he provided one-on-one support to a child with autism. He stated, "...when I talked to him and I looked at him straight in the face, um, I think it imparted better than, even when I was standing next to him, talking to him about what he was doing" (T01, 155).

Like other teachers in this study, Vicky provided one-on-one support to her students that needed it. She described that one of her students with autism came after school for tutorials where she could work one-on-one with him for longer periods of time. Vicky mentioned providing this support when projects or major activities were occurring in class. She said that she worked, "with him independently after school to sort of meet the same objectives" (T04, 101). This was done when she, "significantly need(ed) to talk to him about (the work)...in his case, we could go and do it after school. I would say, 'S*(student name), come see me after school, we need to talk about this project.' It's just as simple as that" (T04, 116-117). She explained that this particular student stayed after school in an extended day program until 6:00 p.m. each day, and she

gave him a pass to come and see her. She explained, “he would come and we would sit and sort of work one-on-one on certain projects” (T04, 28).

The teachers in this study recognized the need to provide one-on-one support to their students. By providing this support either through conversations in the class or tutorials after school, these teachers worked to meet the needs of their students. These needs were in some cases academic in nature, while other times they were behavioral. But, through spending the time to talk one-on-one with their students, the teachers built rapport with them, aided in the student’s learning, and/or encouraged appropriate behavior needed by the students for the classroom setting.

Maintain student focus. Another way the teachers managed their inclusive classrooms was by maintaining student focus. Laura commented on her role in maintaining student focus. She said, “If it’s just quiet work or if it’s group activities...just keeping them engaged. And I have to be a part of that engagement” (T06, 188-189). By not just sitting at her desk, she explained that students were more engaged in their learning.

Teachers frequently mentioned walking around and monitoring as a way to help with student focus. Teachers carefully considered students seating arrangements in order to allow for greater student focus. By keeping students focused in their learning and on the tasks at hand, teachers often reported that they had few to no behavior problems in their classrooms.

Provide behavioral accommodations. For some students, in order to support their self-regulation, specific behavioral accommodations were put in place. These

accommodations were used on an individual level for both students with disabilities and students without disabilities. Teachers explained a variety of accommodations that they made, such as ignoring minor behaviors that did not disturb the class, and allowing for a student to take a break to the restroom when it was needed.

In working with one of her students with autism, Karen described that she ignored one student's minor tantrums because she knew that if she allowed him that time, he would get through the tantrum and then return to work. Karen explained,

I had to...hound him...to do his work because he would just tell you, "no." And I was just very firm and very serious with him. I was like, "Carl (pseudonym) you don't have a choice. You, um, you are in this classroom, everybody does the same assignment, everybody does the same activity. Ya know, you're not excused." And he'd get huffy and puffy and he says some things that are ya know, they're not inappropriate for me, but he, his dad died when he, or a while, I don't know if he was murdered or killed himself but, he blames everything on his dad. So he blames everything that happens to him and me forcing him to do his work, on his dad. So, and he does that and ya know and he kinda stomps, and...I just let him do it. I just, ya know, you can stomp, you can say oh I hate my father, why when my father died he made me this way, ya know, and, and I just let him do it. Because after about five minutes, he just kinda lets go and he'll do his work. 'Cause sometimes you kinda have to let them have their temper tantrum (T02, 172-178).

Karen explained that she did not initially know to handle Carl's tantrums. At first, she tried to get into discussions with him. But, she learned from trial and error that this was not the best behavioral approach with this particular student. She explained, "I would try to talk to him and he would get madder, and so I just let it go...I realized that when I let it go, he let it go" (T02, 196-197).

Be consistent with consequences. Although the teachers provided behavioral accommodations, these teachers had developed and consistently implemented consequences in the classroom. For example, Karen explained that when students were tardy to class, she matter-of-factly reminded them that they needed to stand by their desks for the first five minutes of class. She routinely implemented this consequence for all students in the classroom, including her students with disabilities.

Similarly, Laura explained her view of consistent implementation of rules and consequences as a necessity for effective management. She explained,

If you don't follow up (on implementing a rule and its consequence) you lose the student...But you, the teacher, you have to follow through on it. If you say you're going to do something, do it. Whether it just cringes, you know, I don't make idle threats. I can't do that because nine (times) out of ten something's going to happen...an example is, if a rule is broken and the consequences are lunch detention, I must follow through with it, because if I don't, I've lost it. You know, I just follow through with it. I have to do that (T06, 438-445).

Consistently implementing procedures, rules, and consequences were often discussed as a part of effective classroom management practices in which these teachers engaged.

Teachers felt that students knew what to expect in their classrooms as a result of their consistency.

Awareness of student stressors. In order to provide the behavioral accommodations described above, teachers were remarkably aware of their students' stressors. They knew the academic, organization, social, and even environmental stressors of their different students. Laura described that she became aware that one of her students with autism did not want to change his seat when other students were assigned new seats. He was resistant to the change and had a strong desire to remain in his current seat. She learned that a fragrance plug-in was near his desk and that sitting near the scent not only was his preference but also increased his productivity.

In another situation, Karen became aware of an environmental stressor for one of her students with autism. She explained, "I had to tell the kids to be careful with the pencil sharpener, 'cause the noise...it was very distracting (for the student). So I had to move the pencil sharpener" (T02, 36). Karen explained that she had read about autism and knew that students could experience a sensory overload. But, she did not realize that one stimulus in the environment could cause an overload for her student. Once she became aware of this, she took the action needed by moving the pencil sharpener away from his desk. By doing this, she showed an awareness of his stressors and thus was able to arrange the environment in a way that was more successful for him.

Build student self-esteem. Additionally, teachers supported student's development of self-regulation by mentoring their students and working to build the student's self-esteem. Laura mentioned the importance of building her students' self-

esteem. She explained this process with one of her students, “I did work her through, or she worked herself to the point that I could say to her when she was successful, ‘Oh, you always do good. Sit down. You don’t need for me to tell you how good you are. You know how good you are’...it was just a progression of me not always telling her, ‘Oh you are doing great’, to her feeling good” (T06, 271-272).

Teachers assisted their students as best they could in developing self-confidence and self-esteem. Teachers praised their students and acknowledged when they noticed that the students were communicating self-pride. Several of the teachers mentioned that their former students came back and share with them positive results that they had in a number of different activities, from dancing, to the TAKS test, to cooking. Quite possibly, these students chose to share their successes with their former teachers due to the self-confidence the students had built while working with the teachers.

Remind/redirect all students. Due to their close monitoring of their students, the teachers were able to know when they needed to provide reminders or redirection to their students. This type of support was provided to all of the students either as a class or individually. However, students with disabilities sometimes required more reminders or redirections than other students in the class. Karen explained that she walked around the classroom and need to redirect all of her students. She said, “not only do I have to redirect them (students with disabilities), I kinda have to redirect everybody” (T02, 161).

She explained that she squatted at the individual student’s desk and asked them how the work was going and where their materials were. She explained that while she did not do the work for them, she prompted them to utilize their own resources. She

stated that sometimes they worked the first few problems together and get the students started (T02, 162-163). She explained,

a lot of times they just don't want to get started. They're scared that they're gonna get it wrong. And, usually once we do the first couple together, they're usually like, "Ok, I get it now, I'm, I'm good." And that's usually why they need prompting, it's because they're scared to start the work. They don't want to mess it up. Um, and that's, and that's a lot of kids, ya know, they don't, they don't want to get it wrong. They don't want to fail (T02, 164-165)

Karen went on to explain that with her students with disabilities, she needed to do this type of prompting more frequently than for her other students (T02, 166). By providing the students with these types of reminders or redirections, teachers prompted appropriate participation and behavior and allowed students to be more successful in the classroom with fewer problems.

Figure 5 gives a visual display of the 12 categories described above which fit into the overarching theme of management of behavioral expectations. This diagram was created to serve as a succinct visual reference of the management practices in relation to behavioral expectation, rather than as a conceptual model.

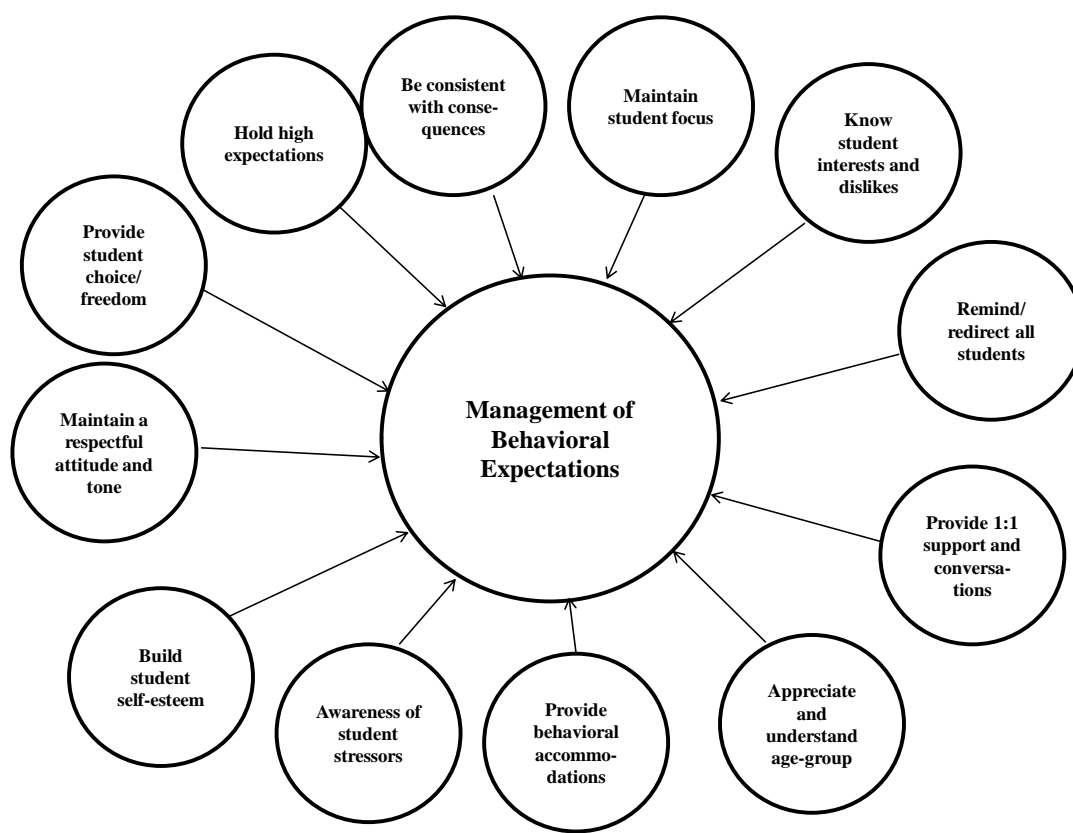


Figure 5. Management of behavioral expectations.

How These Teachers Managed Their Inclusive Classrooms – Summary

The expert inclusive teachers in this study managed their classrooms in a variety of ways that seemed consistent across the group as a whole. A total of 40 distinct classroom management practices and decisions were discussed and described by the teachers. These practices were grouped into three primary themes of classroom management: a) management of student learning, b) management of the environment, and c) management of behavioral expectations. Within each of these themes, teachers used a number of strategies and made a number of decisions which set up an

environment and expectations that allowed for successful inclusion of students with significant cognitive disabilities. These results suggest that expert inclusive secondary classroom management is not simple, but rather is comprised of numerous strategies which are implemented in conjunction with one another on a frequent basis. Expert inclusive classroom managers appear to execute this multitude of practices with ease and efficiency.

Management of Inclusive Classrooms: Management of Universal Design for Learning

In addition to conceptualizing that these 40 categorized management practices and decisions could be collapsed into three overarching themes, I also found that the management practices of these teachers intersected with universal design for learning. For me, this insight into the data occurred while teaching my class on adaptive and assistive technology, specifically during a lesson taught on universal design for learning. In reviewing the general idea and principles behind universal design for learning (UDL) for my class, I was struck that the practices of the teachers in my study exemplified the principles for UDL. I was able to visualize the various management categories that had already emerged from the data and how these categories could be used to show management of UDL.

Universal Design for Learning is “a framework for designing curricula” to meet the needs of diverse students and is based on three guiding principles: (a) multiple means of representation, (b) multiple means of engagement, and (c) multiple means of expression (CAST, 2008). Within each of these three principles are three guidelines, as well as options and examples that are designed to assist teachers in implementing UDL

in their classroom curriculum (CAST, 2008). A UDL curriculum is defined as including goals, methods, materials, and assessment (CAST, 2008).

To highlight the ways in which the management practices of the teachers in this study meld with the principles and guidelines for universal design for learning, I have created Table 5 as a matrix with universal design principles and guidelines on the vertical axis and the three overarching management themes from this study on the horizontal axis. The individual management categories are grounded in the data from this study and are inserted into the rows that correspond to the universal design for learning principle and guideline that they exemplify. These management practices highlight how the teachers in this study managed that particular guideline and principle.

It can be seen that some of the guidelines were clearly practiced by these teachers, as evidenced by the large number of management practices that they utilized in those areas. For example, Guideline VII: Provide Options for Recruiting Interest, is linked to ten separate management practices used by these teachers. Additionally, these management practices represented all three overarching themes of management for this study. However, some of the UDL guidelines were not well represented by the management practices used by these expert teachers. For example, Guideline VI: Provide Options for Executive Functions, was linked with only two classroom management practices of these teachers. This is not to imply that these teachers did not provide their students with options for executive functioning, but rather that these teachers did not comment on this area in connection with their management of inclusive classrooms.

Table 5

Management of Universal Design for Learning (UDL)

UDL Principle and Guideline	Management of Student Learning	Management of the Environment	Management of Behavioral Expectations
Principle I: Provide Multiple Means of Representation Guideline I: Provide Options for Perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include multisensory learning opportunities • Give clear directions • Continually renew planning/Be flexible • Provide alternative assignments/level 		
UDL Principle I, Guideline II: Provide Options for Language and Symbols	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Modify reading materials • Provide copies of papers • Simplify vocabulary and definitions 		
UDL Principle I, Guideline III: Provide Options for Comprehension	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Know student characteristics • Re-teach and provide repeated practice • Craft lesson structure and delivery 		
Principle II: Provide Multiple Means of Expression Guideline IV: Provide Options for Physical Action		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Work within class make-up/size • Think through student seating • Allow for physical access and space 	
Principle II, Guideline V: Provide Options for Expressive Skills and Fluency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow for creative expression • Modify product expectations • Set students up for success 		

Table 5 continued

UDL Principle and Guideline	Management of Student Learning	Management of the Environment	Management of Behavioral Expectations
Principle III: Provide Multiple Means of Engagement Guideline VII: Provide Options for Recruiting Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Include real-world applicability • Utilize time management in pacing 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an inclusive environment • Create a calm learning environment • Develop rapport with all students • Establish a structure with rules 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maintain respectful attitude and tone • Provide student choice/freedom • Appreciate and understand age group • Know student interest and dislikes
Principle III, Guideline VIII: Provide Options for Sustaining Effort and Interest	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Awareness and recognition of growth 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consider classroom dynamics • Work as a whole group/class • Utilize student grouping 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide 1:1 support and conversations
Principle III, Guideline IX: Provide Options for Self-Regulation		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Monitor students 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Build student self-esteem • Be consistent with consequences • Awareness of student stressors • Provide behavioral accommodations • Maintain student focus • Remind/Re-direct all students

A final key point is that every guideline within the UDL framework was in some way identified by the expert teachers of this study. One could say, then, that these teachers managed their inclusive classrooms in a way that fostered universal design for learning. Although these teachers did not specifically label their management in this way, their practices were clearly linked to the concept of and framework of UDL.

In Figure 6, I provided a different way of looking at how these teachers' management practices aligned with UDL. In the figure, the three management themes that emerged from this study were listed on the vertical axis, while the three principles of UDL were listed on the horizontal axis. Each of the management practices, as listed in the table above, has been placed at the intersection of the management theme they represent and the UDL principle which they exemplify.

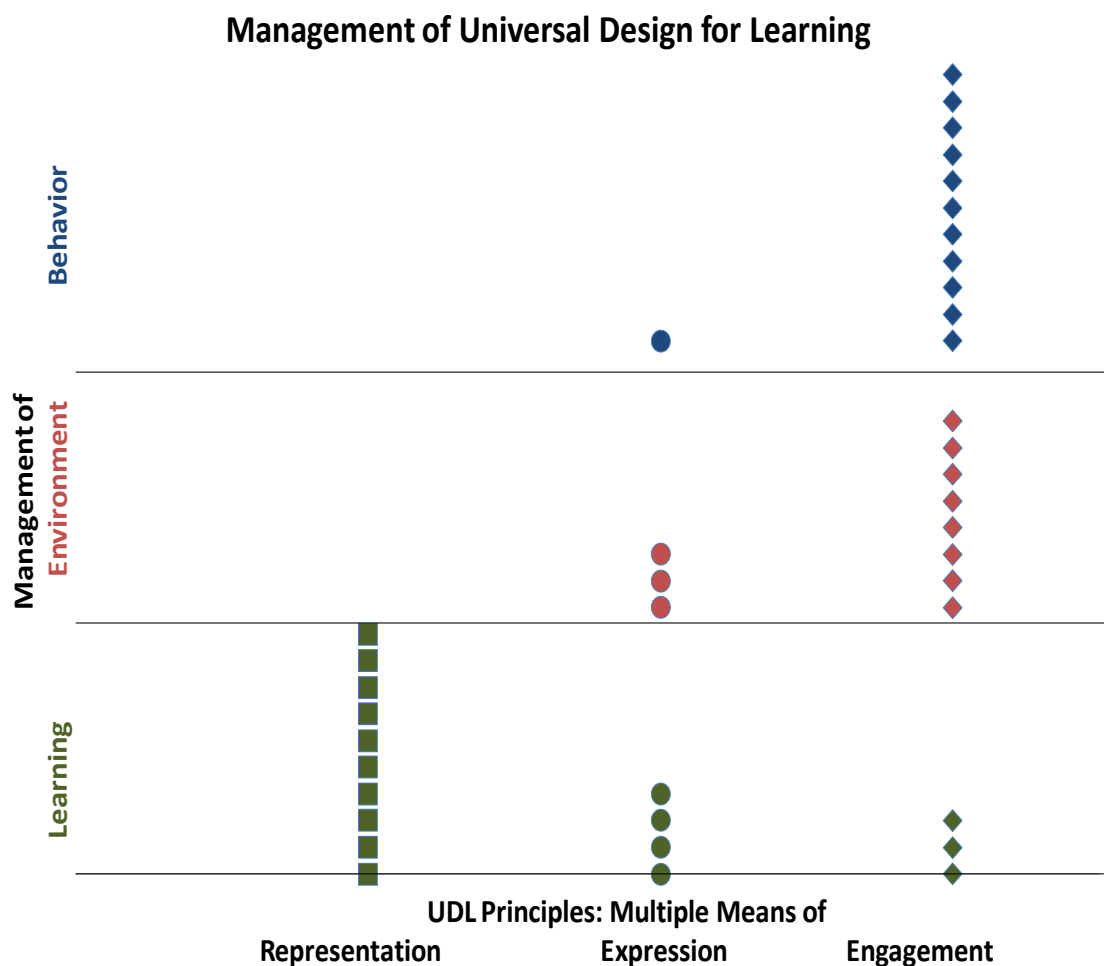


Figure 6. Management of universal design for learning (UDL).

It is apparent that all three UDL principles are followed by these teachers through a number of different classroom management practices. Again, we see that the principle of Multiple Means of Engagement is represented by classroom management practices across the areas of management of student learning, the environment, and behavioral expectations. Management of the UDL principle of Multiple Means of Representation was only represented by classroom management practices in the area of management of

student learning. Finally, the UDL principle of Multiple Means of Expression was represented across all three management themes, yet by only a small number of practices within these themes. It seems clear that the expert inclusive teachers in this study managed their classes in a way which fostered Universal Design for Learning.

How They Learned to Manage Their Classrooms

Research question #2 for this study was, “How do expert secondary teachers learn to manage classrooms that include student(s) with significant intellectual disabilities?” Through interviews, it became clear that these teachers learned to manage their inclusive classrooms through multiple different opportunities and experiences. There was no one way in which these teachers had learned to manage their inclusive classrooms, but rather learning opportunities occurred from traditional learning environments, self-directed learning experiences, and learning from others. These learning experiences came together in a way that assisted the teachers in developing their skills in inclusive classroom management. The teachers were thankful for their many learning opportunities and believed that the diverse learning experiences that they had had contributed to their success in managing their classrooms. In addition to the different ways in which the teachers learned, it should be noted that this learning process was a continual one that built upon itself with each year of teaching experience.

Three primary categories emerged during the analysis of how these teachers learned to manage their classrooms. These categories included a) traditional learning opportunities, b) learning from others, and c) learning from self-directed learning experiences. All of these categories fit within a broader theme of continual/life-long

learning process that contributed to these teachers being able to manage their classrooms in an expert fashion.

Traditional Learning

Teachers stated that courses they took during their undergraduate degree helped prepare them in some ways for the classroom. The teachers recalled learning general definitions for inclusion, modifications, and special education. Some of the teachers also mentioned learning general classroom management practices such as classroom arrangement and developing rules and procedures. However, none of the teachers reported that their undergraduate training had been sufficient to prepare them for effectively managing an inclusive classroom. While they valued what they had learned in their undergraduate programs, they believed that continual training was required to produce expert inclusive classroom management. Karen described her undergraduate pre-service preparation experience in this way,

In my university program, I learned about what an IEP is, what an ARD is, what inclusion is, inclusion arrangement definition, what a behavior plan is. But, not how to work with the kids. Not situations, not strategies. If in senior level literacy field based placement there were students with disabilities, I didn't know. I knew what a modification was, but I didn't know how to read one. I remember what it was like being new and having no clue. They tell you about modifications but *how do I do that?* Do I give extra homework for repeated practice? Special ed department expected everybody to know, 'This is how we do things.' But, unless

you've been there, you don't know...The school district makes assumptions about what teachers know, and that's not always true (T02Follow-Up, 18-29).

Tisha explained that she learned about classroom management procedures, rules, consistency, and classroom arrangement in her pre-service teacher preparation program (FUT03, 14-17). However, she also stated that, "since I wasn't in the special ed program I wasn't expected to teach students with disabilities or (who) have these kinds of needs" (FUT03, 13). Tisha did receive some preparation for classroom management, but did not have adequate preparation for including students with disabilities, which led her to later seek out training on inclusion.

Five of the eight teachers discussed that they had obtained training through graduate level education coursework. Tisha commented on a graduate course she felt took to get a better understanding of effective inclusion. She explained,

I think what helps, is the teacher having an idea of what an inclusion classroom is supposed to look like. You know, what is....what is considered to be effective, and to have some ideas which, when I first started I didn't know. So I took a class at night and that's how I got the idea of different...you know, two or three different programs. And I would try to see which one of these best fits the way my school is trying to do it. And in the early years, we didn't mirror any one of those plans to the tee. But we had bits and pieces of the two I could tell (T03, 286-289).

Laura mentioned her graduate coursework as being beneficial for her as well. She explained that she was enrolled as a student in a Master's of Arts – Teaching program,

where one of her courses discussed, “classroom management...the psychologists...the different beliefs that are out there.” She explained that learning the different theories was helpful, but that she applied her own critical view to each of them. She said, “Some of them I don’t agree with, but that’s okay. I don’t have to” (T06, 433-436).

Another traditional learning path for teachers was through professional development trainings. Almost all of the teachers mentioned district-mandated professional development trainings such as training for working with students with dyslexia and for working with students identified as gifted and talented (GT). Though the district for which these teachers worked provided professional development opportunities, the teachers wanted training that they believed would benefit them in their current classroom. To obtain relevant training, teachers mentioned taking professional development trainings that they selected during the summer months.

Kyle explained his position on learning from professional development summer courses,

Obviously, every summer we are given opportunities to go to professional development courses. Normally what I try to do is when I go, I pick and choose...I always take a classroom management course. Uh, you have a zero year to six year classroom management. A six year to twelve year, so on and so forth. I don’t think that I have learned it all, so I will continue to go to classroom management courses and, and professional development classroom management to continue to learn new techniques or refine the techniques that I have (T07, 199-203).

Learning from Others

Teachers reported that they learned about both classroom management and the inclusion of students with disabilities through communications with others.

Communication about classroom management took place with parents, other teachers and professionals as well as through developing working relationships with various other professionals on their campuses. The teachers viewed others, including parents and their special education co-teacher as resources from who they could learn. Louis, a middle school social studies explained, “The co-teacher is by far your best resource...Really she is my big resource when it comes to special ed children because she is familiar with them” (T08, 202 & 30). Louis further explained that he viewed everyone as a resource.

Tisha spoke about her collaboration with special education teachers in learning how to best serve particular students with disabilities she taught during the year. She explained,

I also talk a whole lot with previous inclusion teachers who worked with these students in the past, to find out what works what, you know, what doesn't work. What are some of the triggers that send them off in the right direction, or what are some that would make them shut down...because our campus is so small, most of the students, if they have been there any length of time, would have had to work with the same inclusion teacher more than once. So, they would have picked up on some things that kind of would have been useful. And that's been really helpful (T03, 108-112).

Teachers consistently spoke about the importance of collaboration for effective inclusion

and that they learned much through their collaboration with other teachers.

Self-directed Learning

The expert teachers engaged in several different types of self or independent learning. They reflected on their teaching to determine what was working and what needed to be improved upon. Kyle, a culinary arts high school teacher, explained that he reflected both on spending an equitable amount of time with his different students and on spending sufficient time discussing different topics. He said, “I will sit back and I will reflect on what I’ve done for the day, and I’m saying to myself, I know they didn’t get enough from me. I know I spent more time with my general ed students than I needed to, or I didn’t ... emphasize this enough.” (T07, 232-235).

In addition to reflection on their practice, teachers frequently mentioned trial and error and experience in the classroom with diverse students as a primary means for learning to manage their inclusive classrooms. Kyle discussed that he intertwined reflecting on what worked with his trial and error attempts and finding what worked best in his classroom. He explained,

I think more so than anything else uh, for me it’s every year just taking the good, bad, of what I’ve, what worked, what didn’t work, you know, and re-modifying it uh, each year...it’s funny when they (the students) come back, and something has changed, or I do something differently than the year before, their comment is, ‘Well, why you change Mr. Hart, what’d we do? You, you’re changing that rule, why? Did we do something wrong?’ And it’s not because they did anything wrong, it’s just because I, ‘Ok, this didn’t work, let’s pull that out and put

something else in its place and see how that works.’ So it’s a lot of trial and error uh, and, and re-learning, you know, re-working what, what I have, uh, to work with (T07, 193-198).

Teachers also actively sought out information, help, and support when they needed it. Their information seeking included information on teaching strategies, inclusive models, legal issues, as well as other areas of needed knowledge. Teachers sought out resources including the internet, other professionals, parents, books and articles, university courses, and teacher development trainings. The help and support that the teachers sought out came from numerous individuals on the campus, but primarily from the special education faculty and staff when the concern was one of a disability issue. Janice explained that she was seen as a veteran teacher on the campus and, as a result, she often had many students with disabilities included in her class with minimal teaching assistant support. Although this was the case, this was not what she wanted. She wanted the support in the classroom of a teaching assistant. She described one time where she had demanded teaching assistant support from the special education department, based on her belief of what was needed in her classroom and what legally was required for inclusion.

...last year we had 11 (special education) kids in one class with no aide. And, I said, ‘Stop. Right now. Nobody’s coming down today unless there’s an aide.’

And so, well then they couldn’t come. I said, ‘Well, then they don’t come, cause you’re breaking the law’ (T05, 387-389).

Due to Janice's actions, she reported that the students did not come to class that day. Janice explained that she felt that the special education department really did not like her that much and was really surprised that the special education department head had nominated her as an expert inclusive teacher (T05, 389-390).

Similar to the active information seeking in which these teachers routinely engaged, the teachers made themselves aware of disability issues. These issues were ones that revolved around the students that they taught, and included issues such as modifications and accommodations, co-teaching arrangements, and disability diagnoses and characteristics. The teachers sought out information and made themselves comfortable with their knowledge, such that they could share this information with others as was needed. For example, Karen described that she sought out information on autism to be better prepared for the first time she had a student with autism included in her classroom.

...the first year that I had the autistic kid...I had to go out and educate myself about what an autistic kid...needed, and what kind of...behavior-wise, what was necessary for me, and...first thing I did, I went to the internet and tried to like find an autism foundation to read...what causes it...'cause I didn't know anything...absolutely nothing...besides what you see on TV (T02, 17-18 and 31-32).

Continual Learning

An overarching theme which was superordinate to the three ways of learning expressed by these teachers was that of continual learning. The expert teachers in this

study, in addition to discussing how they had learned to manage their classrooms, spoke about the importance of continual professional development and life-long learning. With the mindset of continual, lifelong learning as a necessity for teachers, these teachers continually engaged in the different types of learning activities described above. These teachers, although they were considered the experts on their campus, expressed a desire to continue to learn in ways that benefitted their students and their classrooms. They mentioned numerous areas of training that they themselves would continue to be a part of, and discussed how critical this training was for their peers and for future teachers.

Areas addressed by the teachers included a need for more training about inclusion and other special education models. The teachers mentioned that attending professional development trainings in this area would be beneficial, both for themselves and for their teaching peers. Several of the teachers believed that observing other effective inclusion teachers and would be an extremely worthwhile learning experience. Tisha explained her desire to observe effective inclusive classrooms. She said,

But I have never...and that may have been another thing that could have...that could help if we got a chance to observe places where it (inclusion) was working. I have never ever sat in a class and even viewed another inclusion teacher, you know. So I think that's something that's missing, that really needs to happen. But I have never had that experience before (T04, 325-327).

The teachers also mentioned their continued commitment to learning more about classroom management and that they believed that other teachers would also benefit from training in classroom management. Once again, learning through professional

development training opportunities and observing other effective teachers were discussed as effective ways in which to do this.

The teachers additionally mentioned the need for continual professional development in their specific content area. Vicky explained that in-depth knowledge of content aids in effective classroom management. She stated,

I think real, serious knowledge of your curriculum helps so that you don't have to think about that. That when you're in front of the classroom, you can be thinking about all these other things 'cause you're not trying to remember uh, something. You know that...the material is just seeping out of your fingers, so you can focus on all of these other areas. If you're weak in your content I think you get hung up on the content and can't really focus on the students (T04, 328-331).

Finally, the teachers in this study considered information about their new students and learning about their new students as a critical area of training need for all teachers. Karen believed that gaining information about her students allowed her to better meet their needs. She explained,

I don't like receiving my modifications the second week of school, 'cause that's like not good, at all. Um, because I've already tried to deal with them for a week and a half and I still haven't figured anything out... 'cause by that point you're already working and you don't know why...I wish that teachers knew more information about the kids besides 'I have a learning disability', because that doesn't tell me anything...what is your learning disability? You can't see? You can't read? You can't hear? You can't form the letter d? I still to this day, when

they tell me, when I get their uh, modifications, learning disability...repeated drill and practice, still no clue...what any of that is. Um, the kid that I had this year that was borderline MR, I found out in January. I was like, oh, well that explains a whole lot for the past five months. And that was very difficult...And I don't think that that's a confidentiality issue. If I have the kid in my room I should be made aware...I need to know what's going on with them, in order for me to service them. Otherwise, I'm going blind. And I guess that's kind of why I like having the uh, kids with autism, because I know, like it's easy...you know what's wrong, and you know how to deal with it, you're not second guessing, like me finding out he was borderline MR in January (T02, 261-283).

These general education teachers recognized that their special education teaching peers possessed a wealth of information about the different disabilities and about their students with disabilities. They viewed the special education teachers as a source of information that they needed each and every year.

How They Learned to Manage Their Inclusive Classrooms – Summary

Through numerous different learning experiences and opportunities, the teachers in this study learned to become expert inclusive classroom managers at the secondary level. They considered learning to be a continual, life-long process and a professional commitment. Teachers did not stop their learning after completing their undergraduate pre-service preparation; rather they continued learning in a number of ways. They attended graduate courses and professional development trainings. They utilized several independent, self-learning strategies. The teachers learned from others in a number of

ways. These methods to obtain training together helped to develop teachers who were selected by their peers as being experts at inclusive classroom management. However, even given their expert status, the teachers described further learning opportunities upon which they would capitalize. Figure 7 below shows a visual display of the ways in which these teachers learned to expertly manage their inclusive classes.

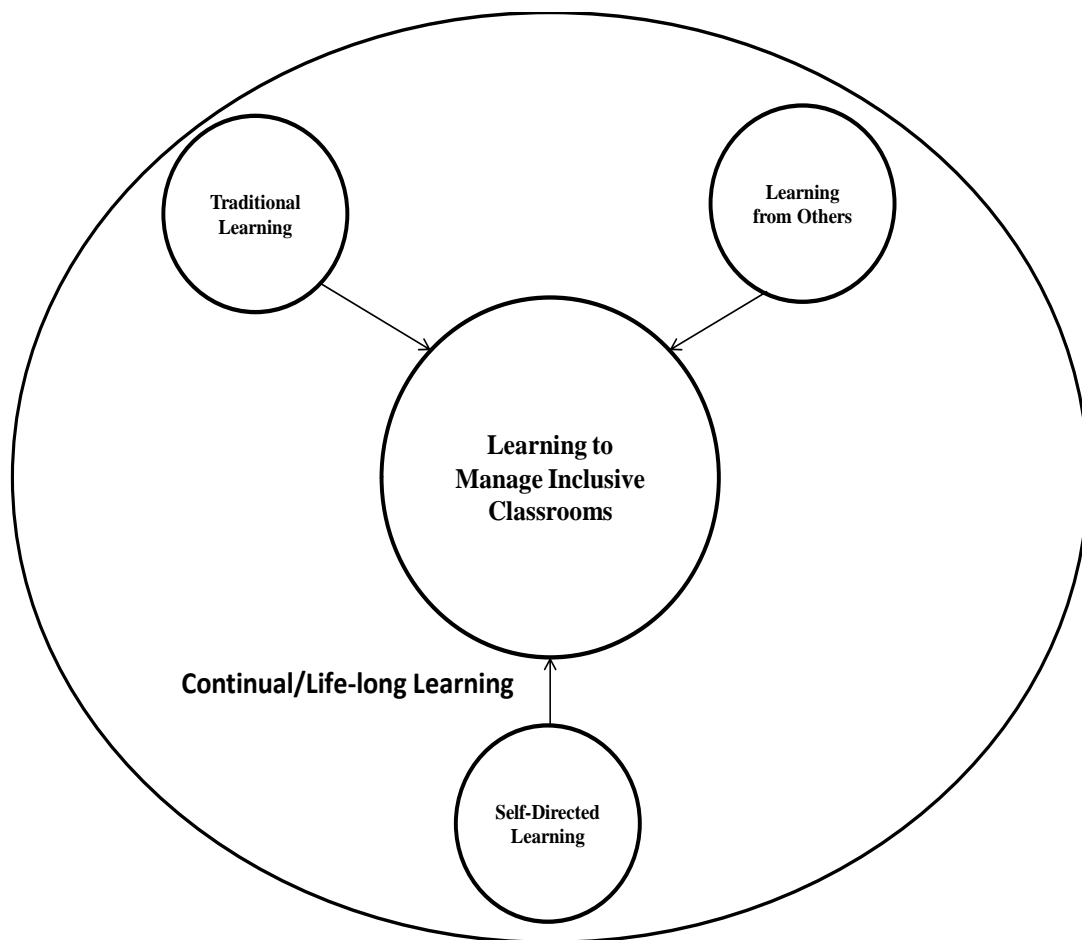


Figure 7. How the teachers learned to manage their inclusive classes.

To consider the continual learning of these teachers over time, the following diagram, Figure 8, was created. In the figure below, pre-service preparation and professional development while in-service have been separated to show distance over time. Each of the three learning strategies of traditional learning, learning from others, and self-directed learning were utilized by these teachers during both time periods.

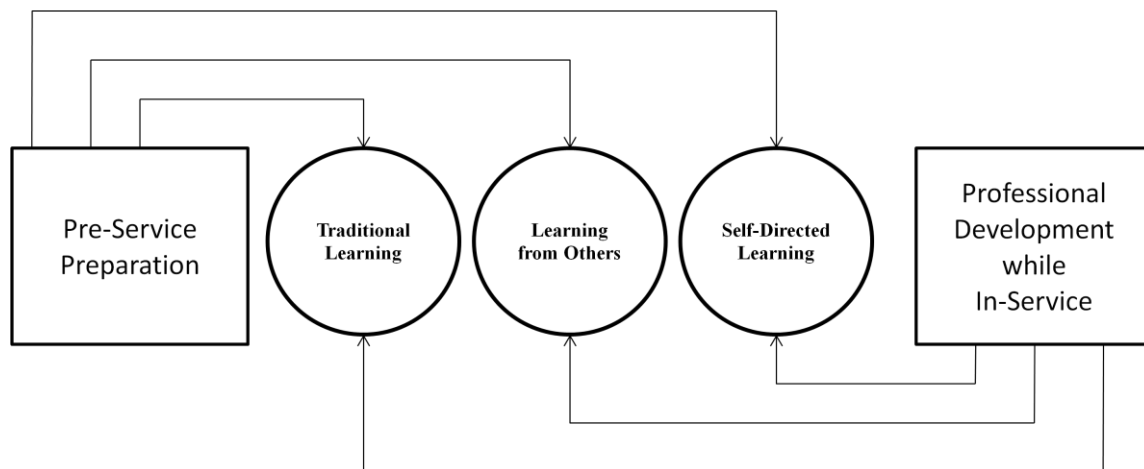


Figure 8. Life-long learning.

As seen in the figure above, the expert teachers in this study employed a number of strategies to learn to effectively manage their inclusive classrooms. This learning continued after pre-service preparation, with the teachers improving and perfecting their instructional and management skills over time.

Additional Contribution into Expert Inclusive Classroom Management

Although the design of this research study was to carefully consider two distinct bodies of knowledge, first, how these teachers managed their classes and second, how they learned to do so, it is worthwhile to consider these data as a whole rather than through fragmenting their strategies. While the strategies that these teachers used to manage their classes and how they learned these strategies were discussed, categories emerged from the data which did not fit directly into either one of these two research question areas. The two predominant areas that emerged from the data but that did not pertain to either one of the research questions were that a) the teachers developed comfort with others in their classrooms and b) recognized that their teaching dispositions added to their effectiveness in inclusive classroom management.

Comfort with Others

First, the teachers in this study frequently spoke about comfort with included children and other adults in their classroom and how learning to develop this comfort contributed to their effective inclusive classroom management. Several of the teachers commented on a change in their thinking about inclusion and working with students with disabilities. They discussed moving from a feeling of fear and uneasiness in working with students with disabilities to a place of realizing that kids with disabilities are students, too. Tisha explained that this process worked for her.

...when I came to....when I transferred to that school, I had already taught like ten years and had no concept of what inclusion was....because I came from a school where students who, you know, were identified in any way, were sent to

either content mastery, or resource class. And so, I only came into contact with those students with needs if they were in my home room. But, when I got to this particular school, and the whole school was inclusion, I had no idea what I was getting into. And in all honesty I was scared. I was really scared...I didn't know what to do, how to include them...And a part of it was that I took a class. I just took a class on inclusion at one of the local universities, just to get an idea of what is inclusion, and how it was supposed to work. And so that was one thing I did. And then it just got to a point where I had to tell myself these are kids like anybody else....and I think what I would say what attributes to me being able to work effectively in an inclusion environment, is to just see them as people. You know what I am saying. And, yes, they have differences, but everybody in there has differences. So, I think once I got more comfortable with being around the students, things just kind of fell in place (T03, 97-105).

For several of the teachers in this study, learning to become comfortable with additional adults in the classroom was a process. Having more than one teacher or adult in the classroom is common when including students with significant disabilities, so this was an essential element to learn. These teachers commented that they did not like to give up control of their classrooms by giving educational and management power to other adults in the room. But, for their inclusive classrooms to function smoothly, teachers allowed themselves to expand beyond their single-teacher controlled classroom comfort. They viewed the other adults in the room as a resource and a positive benefit to their entire class. Laura described that she worked through the dynamics needed in co-

teaching and she eventually became comfortable with and valued a new co-teacher that was placed in her classroom in the spring semester; Laura explained,

We just need to know, uh, how we are going to handle both of us in a classroom and what we are going to do... and again because my focus is always on 'what is this going to do to my children'...how is this going to impact on my children in the classroom...I introduced her as the co-teacher. Not somebody, *the co-teacher*...what we've seen in the past is, this is the regular ed teacher and I just follow whatever it is she says follow. So, if at any given time I walk out of the room, it's like that other person isn't even there, okay. And having been through that, I thought, *'perfect opportunity. We're not ever letting this happen ever again.'* So, I introduce her as the co-teacher and she taught some lessons...I think I'm a little bit more open about it because I'm new to the classroom. I don't know if I would have made that transition if I had been in the track classroom five, six, ten, fifteen, twenty years. If I had been in a classroom twenty years, I don't think I would have made the transition, based on what I know. It's my classroom. I would hate for somebody to come in here...But when you stay focused on what's going to work best for the children, then it makes it a little easier, and when there is *consistency*...we both have to accept the role of the co-teacher. So there are dynamics that need to be worked out...That's why the planning and collaboration is real critical. If they are going to be in here for only ten minutes, every other day, I don't think I'd turn my kids loose on them...But I

was very, very pleased to have the person that I had. It made the transition a lot easier (T06, 368-384).

This process of becoming comfortable with others in the classroom likely impacted both the teachers' management practices and the ways in which they learned to manage their inclusive classroom. Thus, it seems that this concept of developing comfort with others in the classroom had a great impact on producing effective inclusive classroom management for these teachers.

Disposition

A second concept that emerged from the data as a category yet could not be subsumed under either research question #1, nor under research question #2, was that of teacher disposition. The teachers in this study frequently cited different portions of their disposition as a fundamental part of what made them effective at managing inclusive classes. This included the notions of their unique teaching styles and their unique personalities. Tisha described her personality in the classroom and felt it aided in relating to her students and developing rapport with them. She stated, "I can be... a little peculiar, myself. Like talking to the invisible Peter (which she used in class as a motivational strategy). So, when...they already think you are kind of out there,...I think it just... I have a way with all of them, and it is because of that" (T03, 214-215).

Laura described her personality in a different way, somewhat between a mother and a boot camp sergeant. She attributed her success in management and the lack of behavior problems in her classroom to her personality type. She explained that some new students came into her class saying,

We're going to army camp.' And I'd say, 'Yep, you got it right.'...but I, I really don't... have behavior problem(s). My colleagues tell me I don't have a behavior problem is because I'm the motherly type. And because I am older, and firm, and can just look at a child once they...we'd know each other. Then they would generally stop misbehaving and not be a distraction (T06, 60-64).

The teachers' comments related to their dispositions further included liking to teach, liking the job, and liking to work with their students. As Tim stated, "I like kids. I love middle school. People always say, 'You teach middle school? Oh bless you.' But I really like middle school...I think liking to teach is the single most important thing" (T01, 236-238 and 254). Janice's explanation below showed that she not only liked to teach, but she grew to truly like and appreciate the students that she taught. She explained,

I think the students I teach are outstanding. I am impressed with their efforts. The special ed kids are the kids that really touch your heart. One special education student I mentored from 6th grade on, and I still care for him. He is still a big part of my life. You know, when we work so hard to modify for the kids to help them be successful, they are important to us (FUT05, 20-24).

A final aspect of the teachers' dispositions that contributed to their inclusive management success was their routine practice of taking their work seriously and viewing their professional role in a responsible manner. Louis described his firm belief that teachers should follow through on their teaching responsibilities. He explained that a teacher's role includes,

Knowing your kids; caring about your kids; loving your kids, but loving them the right way. Making sure that you are doing things because it's best for them and not just because it's what's going to make them happy for that ten, fifteen seconds or whatever...Be prepared every day. And the thing is if you come here and act like a professional, and you know, you look like a professional, and you act like a professional in front of the students, and you have your stuff prepared, I mean...being prepared, but being prepared to change...Take ownership for yourself. Don't pawn your problems off onto someone else; that doesn't do you any good...a lot of times the kids would lose respect for you if you do. I mean being prepared (T08, 207-211, 213-214, 219, & 224-227).

That these teachers took their jobs seriously and responsibly was evident to other teachers on the campuses as well. Tisha's special education teaching peer commented that what makes her effective was that she had the "...attitude that students may need more than your job description requires you to do. (She is) receptive to notion that she is the teacher to the students in her class, not just an eighth grade teacher" (S03, 1-4). In this special education teacher's comment, there is an underlying message that Tisha did not just see herself as a content area teacher, but as a teacher of all of her students, including her students with disabilities.

With these dispositions possessed by each of the expert teachers in this study, the teachers were able to manage their inclusive classes effectively, and they engaged in life-long learning practices which ultimately allowed for them to become even more expert in managing their classes. A diagram which illustrates the components this

study's results has been presented below, in Figure 9. The figure presents the strategies in which these teachers engaged, including their management and learning strategies. These strategies are centered on the diagram, while the categories of teacher disposition and comfort with others have been placed above the strategies on the diagram to indicate that they affect both strategies. However, insufficient data existed in this study to provide justification for a linkage between teacher disposition and comfort level with others. It seemed that the teachers' dispositions could have played a role in the teachers' willingness to develop a comfort level with others, but with the data that was collected for this study a clear linkage between these two concepts could not be confidently drawn. Ultimately, the strategies employed by the teachers as well as their dispositions and comfort level with others were encapsulated by the overarching concept of expert teachers of inclusive classrooms, the overall research focus of this study.

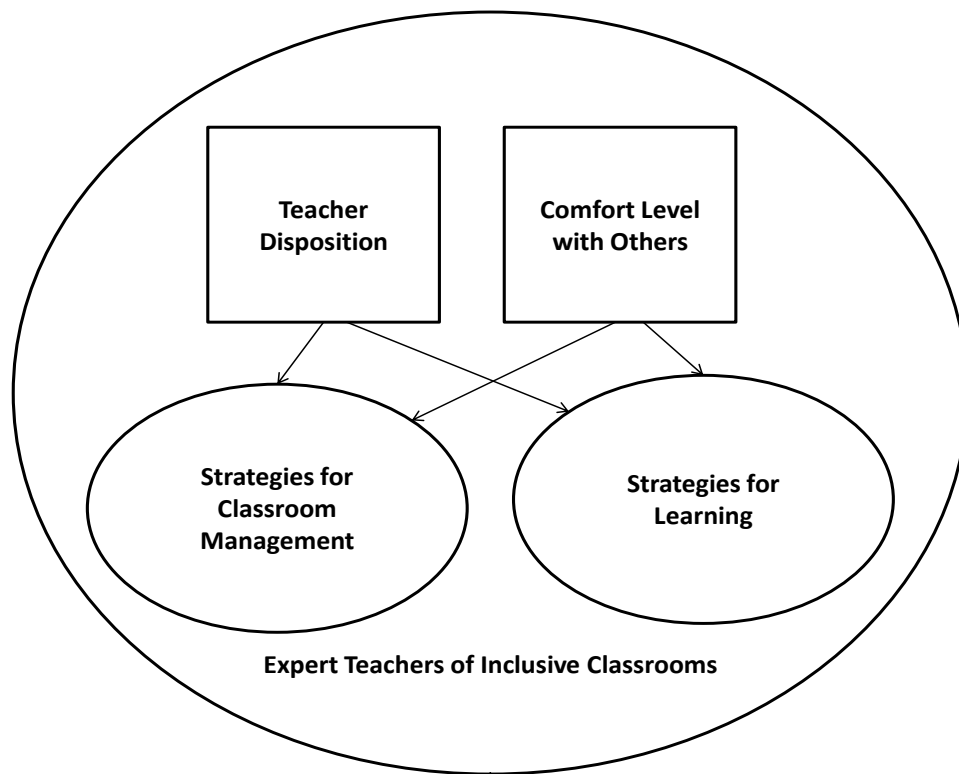


Figure 9. Expert inclusive teachers.

The teachers' positive and professional dispositions, along with their developed comfort level with students with disabilities as well as other adults in their classrooms, contributed to and impacted both the strategies that the teachers employed in managing their classrooms and their own strategies for learning. The dispositions held by these teachers and their developed comfort level with others seemed to allow for the teachers to employ successful management strategies and learning strategies. It seemed that dispositions and comfort level served as a personal base for these teachers, upon which they could build, explore, and implement strategies that worked well for them and for their students.

CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

Inclusion has become a relatively common practice in schools today and is a practice whose effectiveness has been supported by numerous studies (Cole et al., 2004; Downing & Eichinger, 2003; Smith, 2007; Van Laarhoven et al., 2007). Inclusive practices are likely to continue in public schools for many years to come (Peltier, 1997) and, as such, teacher education programs must prepare teachers to meet the challenges that inclusion will bring. Teachers need to be adequately prepared for managing classes (Jones, 2006; King-Sears, 1997; Spinelli, 1998; Stough, 2006), that increasingly include students with significant disabilities.

The general education secondary teachers in this study were experts at managing classes that included students with significant cognitive disabilities by virtue of both rigorous selection and the practices that they reported. These teachers were identified by instructional leaders on their campus as being expert classroom managers of their inclusive classrooms who consistently made positive academic impact on their included students with disabilities. The expert teachers in this study had at least three years of teaching experience a) in a public school, b) with students with significant cognitive disabilities, and c) within the same academic content area. Each of these teachers was certified through the Texas State Higher Education Coordinating Board with the necessary certification(s) to teach the age level and content matter that they taught at the time of the study, and they had earned the required degree needed for their particular certification(s). Each of these criteria for selection of expert teachers aligned with the

recommendations for rigorous selection of expert teachers as suggested by Palmer et al. (2005).

Two research questions guided this study; the first of which focused on how the expert teachers managed their inclusive secondary classrooms. The second research question addressed how it was that these teachers learned to effectively manage their inclusive classrooms.

Research Question #1: How Expert Teachers Manage Secondary Inclusive Classrooms

Through interviews with the expert teachers and their special education teaching peers, I gained an understanding of how these general education teachers managed their inclusive classes so effectively. The expert teachers in this study managed their inclusive classes in three key ways through: a) management of student learning, b) management of the environment, and c) management of behavioral expectations. Each of these management practices consisted of identifiable and unique strategies and decisions.

Management of Student Learning

As documented in previous research, effective classroom managers engage in complex decision making processes in order to implement well thought-out strategies regarding their classrooms, their students, and their learning (eg., Evertson et al., 2006; Jordan, Lindsay, & Stanovich, 1997; Sprick et al., 1998). Research on expert teachers has shown that they develop automaticity and routinization of their skills, such that they are more flexible and opportunistic (Berliner, 2004). Similar to findings described by Berliner (2004), the teachers in this study had developed classroom management skills that became automatic and routine for them. Further, the teachers in this present study

clearly had a number of strategies at their disposal that they were comfortable in utilizing.

The few studies on expert classroom management of classes with students with disabilities discuss management of student learning in terms of individual scaffolding (Carolan & Guinn, 2007), using flexible ways to reach instructional outcomes (Carolan & Guinn, 2007), or mining subject-area expertise (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). Each of these practices were subsumed in this study under the implementation of classroom management: The teachers in this study used a number of strategies for their students in a variety of ways, based on what they knew about their individual students as well as the content matter.

Management of the Environment

The inclusive practices of expert middle school teachers in this study were found to be similar to those described by Carolan and Guinn (2007). Although the Carolan and Guinn study did not focus on practices in classes of students with significant cognitive disabilities, the practices of the teachers in their study were implemented by both middle and high school teachers in this study. In addition, in the Carolan and Guinn study, the teachers created caring learning environments and viewed individual differences as assets in the classroom, as was the case with the teachers in the this study.

The findings of this study are also similar to Gelzheiser et al.'s (2002) study of the inclusive practices of 52 general education teachers. Gelzheiser et al. (2002) found patterns in the inclusive practices of the teachers, such as the use of a variety of grouping strategies, as well as providing modifications for seating. Similarly, in this present study,

the teachers used a variety of grouping strategies, including whole class discussions, peer tutoring, and one-on-one instruction. As found in the Gelzheiser et al. study, this present study also demonstrated that expert inclusive secondary teachers were thoughtful in planning their classroom seating arrangements and how they designed the learning environment. In addition to the similarities to the Carolan and Guinn study and the Gelzheiser et al. study, numerous other teacher practices specific to management of the classroom environment were found to be regularly and effectively employed by the teachers in this study.

Management of Behavioral Expectations

Due, in part, to their expert management of behavioral expectations, the teachers in this study frequently mentioned that they had “no real behavior problems.” Although this is not a comment typically heard from teachers, the expert special education teachers in the Stough and Palmer (2003) study also were described as using proactive strategies to prevent problem behaviors. Similarly, in this present study, the teachers were found to use a number of strategies to proactively prevent behavioral problems. Another similarity to the Stough and Palmer (2003) study was that the teachers in this study possessed a large amount of knowledge about their students. Specifically, the expert teachers in this study knew much about their students’ likes and dislikes as well as probable triggers for their students. This knowledge assisted the teachers in keeping their students interested in the learning and thus, prevents behavior problems.

Management of Universal Design for Learning

The expert inclusive secondary teachers in this study made management decisions and utilized management practices that promoted an environment suitable for universal design for learning curriculum instruction. The management practices of these teachers aligned well with the UDL principles and highlighted how the three principles of UDL (CAST, 2008) can be implemented in the classroom. Research has consistently associated successful classroom management with student achievement gains in the curriculum (Good & Brophy, 2008). Although UDL principles focus on curriculum design, the results of this study suggest that effective classroom management is an essential part of effectively implementing a UDL curriculum.

Research Question #2: How the Expert Teachers in This Study Learned to Manage Their

Inclusive Secondary Classes

Traditional Learning

The teachers in this study all had completed a formal teacher preparation program. However, little content regarding inclusive education or special education was presented in their teacher training programs. This reported lack of training in inclusion at the pre-service level is consistent with other findings in the literature (Downing, 2002; Heflin & Bullock, 1999; Winter, 2006). In addition, while the teachers in this study reported that they had learned about classroom management during their teacher preparation, they felt this training was not sufficient: Almost all had chosen to learn more about classroom management through other learning opportunities. This finding was also consistent with the extant literature, in that training in classroom management

is often reported to be lacking in pre-service preparation (Houston & Williamson, 1992; Watson, 2006; Wesley & Vocke, 1992).

Teachers in this study reported attending professional development trainings and enrolling in graduate coursework. Some teachers reported taking additional professional development trainings in areas such as inclusion, classroom management, dyslexia, and instructional modifications. However, they also reported that many times these trainings did not satisfy their classroom needs. Other teachers in this study did not know that these professional development courses were offered, except for those that were district-mandated trainings. The majority of the expert teachers in this study enrolled in graduate courses, some of which covered desired topics including inclusionary practices and classroom management theories, further illustrating the desire of these expert teachers to increase their management skills.

Learning from Others

In this study, the expert general education teachers frequently mentioned that collaborating with their special education peers was a positive activity that was needed for effective inclusion of the students with disabilities in their classrooms. The teachers reported learning from other teachers through their collaborative efforts as well. These collaborative efforts resulted in learning from other general education teachers, special education teachers, and specialists. Teachers reported not only learning about effective inclusion but also about effective classroom management strategies from those with whom they collaborated.

Research has shown that collaboration with others, such as mentor teachers, has successful outcomes for novice, beginning, or pre-service teachers (e.g., Krull, Oras, and Sisask, 2007). Recommended practices on pre-service preparation also acknowledge the key role of collaboration as a part of teacher training (Jones, 2006). In this present study, it is evident that experienced teachers can continue to learn from their collaborative experiences, well beyond their early teaching years.

Self-directed Learning

Another way in which teachers in this study learned to manage their inclusive classes was through self-directed and self-initiated independent learning. Teachers discussed that they independently sought out training opportunities on inclusive education and on classroom management from sources including the internet and books. Teachers additionally learned through their direct experience with students with disabilities and through trial and error in applying strategies.

These results are different, however, from those found by Jenkins and Mulrine (2008) in a survey of 98 secondary student teachers and 262 secondary teachers. The teachers in their study completed an 83 item survey to examine confidence in teaching students with disabilities. Relevant to this current study, Jenkins and Mulrine found that one of the least confident areas for teachers was in actively seeking out current research and information that would help them in understanding and effectively teaching students with disabilities (Jenkins & Mulrine, 2008). This finding is different from this current study's finding in that these expert teachers actively and independently sought out information and training to assist them in meeting the needs of the students in their

classroom. Perhaps, this contrast was because the teachers in this study were identified as experts, thus they were unique when compared to secondary general education teachers as a whole.

Life-Long/Continual Learning

The teachers in this study learned to become expert inclusive classroom managers through numerous routes. Their learning was not complete after finishing their teacher preparation programs. The teachers in this study became experts at inclusive classroom management via a number of different continuous learning opportunities upon which they capitalized. Their engagement in continual, or life-long learning, was likely brought about by the value in education that they held for not only their students, but for themselves as well.

Krull et al. (2007) discussed differences in novice and expert teachers' "comments on classroom events as indicators of their professional development" (p. 1038). The authors argued that developing expertise as a professional requires "significant perceptual and thinking capabilities," which "starts with pre-service teacher education and continues throughout the following professional activities of a teacher" (p. 1038). In this present study, it appeared that expertise did not develop immediately after completion of a pre-service preparation program, but rather developed over time and was supported by a number of professional development activities throughout a teacher's educational career.

Implications for Teacher Preparation

Learning from Expert Teachers

Gaining insights from expert teachers who do a superior job of managing inclusive classrooms is a worthwhile endeavor for practice as well as research. Carolan and Guinn (2007) stated that expert teachers in the schools “provide an invaluable resource for teacher learning” (p. 47). These authors proposed that teacher expertise could be utilized through developing mentoring relationships between novice and expert teachers, including videotaping the expert teachers during instruction so that novice teachers could view examples of how differentiation is done well (Carolan & Guinn, 2007). The teachers in this study frequently mentioned the importance in learning from others and discussed how other teachers on their campus benefitted from collaboration and through observations of effective teachers.

Carolan and Guinn’s (2007) suggestion of developing mentoring relationships was worthwhile and was supported through comments of these teachers. Mentorship allows for novice or pre-service teachers to be paired with expert teachers. Several studies have discussed how teachers report learning about classroom management through real experiences in the field (Stough, Montague, Williams-Diehm, and Landmark, 2006; Whitney et al., 2002), some of which indicate that novice teachers may learn more in the field than in their university coursework (George, George, Gersten, and Grosenick, 1995). Expert teachers could be a mechanism through which knowledge and skill may be transferred to incoming teachers to prepare them to be more effective in inclusive classrooms.

Jones (2006) put forth recommendations for effective teacher training in classroom management. Part of those recommendations included experiences in the field with cooperating teachers who were effective at classroom management strategies. Expert teachers such as the teachers in this study would make ideal candidates to mentor pre-service interns or student teachers, as they were not only effective at classroom management, but also in including students with disabilities. Teacher preparation programs would do well to invest the time necessary to seek out cooperating teachers who are truly effective inclusive teachers and classroom managers.

Restructuring of Teacher Preparation Programs

General education teachers do not always feel prepared for including students with disabilities (Boling, 2007), although this preparation is of paramount importance. The results of this study provided data that could be helpful when considering restructuring of teacher preparation programs to train teachers for inclusive classrooms. Van Laarhoven et al. (2007) discussed one such effort where both general education and special education majors were co-enrolled in a course. As part of this program, students received experience in inclusive settings, assistive technology, functional behavior assessments, instructional accommodations, and lesson planning utilizing universal design. As a whole, students participating in the program were positively impacted in both their attitudes towards inclusion and their abilities. Additionally, student participants indicated that participation in the project was beneficial to them, especially their collaboration with “majors from different educational areas” (p.454).

Knowing that general education teachers are likely to teach in inclusive environments, and that part of their responsibility will be to collaborate with special education teachers, future teachers need to be trained in collaborative practices. Preparation programs could be improved upon by offering coursework wherein both special education and general education pre-service teachers have the opportunity to work together and collaborate, such as described by Van Laarhoven et al. (2007). The teachers in this present study reported very little learning about inclusive education or special education through their pre-service training programs. But, when asked about what prepares a teacher for inclusive classroom management, many of the teachers emphatically stated the need to train teachers about working with students with different disabilities, about how to implement modifications, and about inclusion in general.

Including Universal Design for Learning in the Curriculum

One additional possibility in addressing teacher preparation needs in inclusive classroom management would be to provide training on universal design for learning (UDL) for both general and special education pre-service and in-service teachers. It is noted that this focus should not replace coursework in classroom management or special education, as these areas are known to be needed when adequately preparing teachers for the classroom. Instead, coursework training on universal design for learning should be an addition to existing content in teacher preparation programs.

Training future teachers in UDL seems appropriate given the results of this study. The teachers' practices of managing the learning materials, learning environment, and behavioral expectations of students meld well with the general principles of UDL. Given

that these expert teachers managed their classes in this way, and given the growing literature support for UDL instruction (Burgstahler, 2001; CAST, 2008), it would seem that teacher training programs would provide valuable knowledge to future teachers through inclusion of UDL principles and management of UDL as part of their undergraduate curriculum.

Limitations

There were several limitations to this study. The study was conducted only in urban secondary schools, and only with expert language arts, social studies, or art teachers. Although the participant criteria used did not limit the involvement of science or math teachers, no teachers of these subject areas volunteered to participate. Further, as this study was only conducted in urban secondary schools, the practices of these teachers may not apply to teachers of younger students or to teachers in mid-size or rural campus. An additional limitation was that the demographic make-up of the teachers in this study consisted of African American and white teachers. Teachers of other ethnic groups did not volunteer to participate in this study, although they were nominated. The inclusion of teachers with greater diversity may have provided a richer pool of information. Finally, this study focused on the classroom management of classes that included students with significant cognitive disabilities; therefore teachers who did not instruct students with these disabilities were not included in this study.

Suggestions for Further Research

The focus of this study was on the expert management practices of secondary inclusive teachers. Little has been written on secondary inclusive classroom management practices. Although these results add to the existing literature base, further studies in this area are needed. Additionally, studies are warranted that address the specific limitations of this study in context, teacher ethnic make-up, and teacher content areas. Also, research on expert teachers of students with different types of disabilities, such as behavioral disorders or learning disabilities, would be a valuable addition to the field. Finally, studies in this area which would explore classroom management practices and their connection to the principles of UDL at all grade levels, in different settings, and with students with diverse ability levels would be a beneficial addition to the literature.

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